



Sermon Transcription • Galatians 5:16-23 (NIV)

## Check the Fruit

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

There's an old story that I've told before that I don't know if it's true. Honestly, it's a preacher story that I heard years and years ago, and thought, "Isn't that a really appropriate way of describing the challenge that goes on inside Christians who are trying to follow God." Snopes.com will eventually get a hold of it and disprove its truthfulness, I'm sure. But that's okay, it's really an interesting way of describing, as I said, what goes on inside of us. When we want to follow the call of God and obey him.

So here's the story. There's a missionary who works with Native Americans, First Nations people in the United States. So he would go and he would go to different villages and he would preach the gospel to those people and some people would come to faith in Christ and then he would try to establish a church in that place. In one village that he went to, there was a chief there and he preached the gospel and the chief believed. And the chief ended up becoming the pastor of the little church that was planted there. The missionary, as was his custom, would leave from that location and he would go to another village after a few weeks of establishing the church. And then he would make another tour around those new found churches after he had gone through his whole gamut of villages. Sometimes it took between, you know, two and three years to get back to the same village. And so this is what happened. This chief comes to faith in Christ, becomes the pastor of this little church, it gets established and helped by the missionary who then goes away for a couple years and comes back to see how the church is doing. When he gets back, they had this big parade for him and the chief was out in the front, he was welcoming him into his village, and they were walking along the way to the meeting house where they were going to have some discussions. And the missionary with his arm around the chief says, "So I just, how's it going? And I don't mean how's it going with the village I mean how's it going with your faith?" The chief said, "You know, it's like there are two dogs fighting inside of me. There's a dark dog and there's a light dog. The dark dog wants me to do all the things that I used to do, the way that I used to live before I came to faith in Jesus. And the light dog is always calling me and urging me to do the opposite. And they're just at each other, fighting all the time." Missionary said, "Oh that's a remarkable way of describing what goes on inside of Christians. If you don't mind me asking," said the missionary, "Which one of the two is winning?" And the chief said, "Well, whichever one I feed."

Now, again, I don't know. Seems a little too trite for it to be probably true. But I think, you know...honestly, it's a really helpful image. These two dogs fighting inside of us. Because that's the



way it seems if you're a Christian here. This is probably how you feel, you know, there's a battle that wages war. When you want to obey God in a particular way, or you want to, you know, turn away from a sinful, indulgent sort of temptation. There's this battle inside of your heart. You know, even in our culture we have images for this. You know, the little angel that sits on the shoulders, there's a little white angel with his little halo and there's the pitchfork red caped dude on the other. And they're whispering in our ears, and so we even use language like, "We want to appeal to the better angels of our nature" and things like that. So we understand that there exists in us a fight.

But the question that we Christians are plagued with is, why is it so hard to obey God? I mean we've been saved from the penalty of sin. That's what it means to be in Christ right? The righteousness of Jesus is given to us so that when we stand before God he does not see us in ourselves, he sees us in Christ. And he attributes the righteous standing of Jesus to us. Even if we're not righteous, which we are. So we're saved from the penalty of sin. We will be with God forever because of Christ's finished work. But what about sin's power? How much freedom do we get from sin's power in this life? Are we doomed to failure over and over again? To giving in to the little pitchfork guy? To that dark dog? Or can we have significant victory? Can we walk with God consistently and sinlessly even? And there's debate about that among Christians. You ever seen that bumper sticker on the back of some cars that says, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." I always think that's funny. It's usually on the back of the car that's driving very poorly, right? Don't expect anything more from me, alright? But is that the way it is? Is that essentially the only difference between somebody who's a Christian and somebody who's not a Christian is the Christian is forgiven. Don't expect any kind of difference in lifestyle, or in holiness, or in anything like that. Or compare that with what my friend, who mentored me years ago, said in a Monday night Bible study. He told a group of ten high school kids, and I was one of them, he said to us, "Listen, guys. I haven't sinned in weeks." And I said, "...Til now." Right? But is that—there are people who believe that. The normal Christian life should be kind of a sinless one, or you don't give in to temptation pretty much at all. There's no known sin in your life for weeks on end. Or is it somewhere in the middle?

This passage, Galatians chapter 5, that's what's it's about. It tries to answer some of these questions. Paul, the guy who wrote it, the apostle, he tries to answer and engage with this. What should you expect from the Christian life? So, look, this is the last sermon in our series on the Holy Spirit. I've really enjoyed this series. Today we're gonna focus on the Spirit's work in making us holy. How is it that the Holy Spirit works in us so that we say "Yes" to God when we're tempted with sin. So, four steps in this passage. First, the passage is going to describe how we are in a fight. We, Christians, are in a fight between the flesh and the Spirit. Second, what happens then if we choose to side with the flesh. Third, what happens if we choose to side with the Spirit. And then finally, how do we win it? How do you win the fight? How do you choose the Spirit and not the flesh? Okay, there's a battle. What if you choose the flesh, what if you choose the Spirit, how do we win.



## **[We Are in a Fight Between the Flesh and the Spirit]**

Here's the first part, we are in a fight between the flesh and the spirit. Galatians 5:16-18,

“So I say, [says the Apostle Paul] walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires] what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

So, this sounds for so many of us like there are two parts of us. Paul's describing that there's this fleshly part and there's this spiritual part. And that there's a battle inside of us that's going on between the fleshly bit and the spiritual bit. That's actually not the way he uses this language. I know that it sounds that way, but when Paul uses language of flesh and spirit, he's not talking about two parts of you. So much as he's talking about two governing authorities over you. So the flesh was your governor, it was your master. Now the Spirit is your master, but you live, in Paul's language in other places, between the ages. Now here's what I mean by that language, okay. I'm going to draw my picture because pictures are awesome. So, here's the way that Paul understands, basically, history. [Turns to easel to illustrate as he speaks, at 8:50] He talks about how there's an age that's passing away. So there's the age that's passing away. And that age was governed by the flesh. It will come to end. When? Well, when Christ returns. And there's an age to come which we are currently in, he says, you are in the age to come. And it's gonna last forever. And he defines that as the age of the spirit where the spirit has authority. And it started when Jesus came the first time. So, Christians now live in what's called the overlap of the ages. This section in here, we live with two voices calling out to us. One that is of the spirit, to do the things that God calls us to do. And one that is of the flesh, that is calling us to do what we were prior to we became Christians and this is kind of the governing authority of the world around us, the culture around us. So the point that he's making in this though, is that, how do you define this overlap of the ages? How do you define it? There's tension. The kind of tension that happens to anybody who moves from one governing authority, being under one, to another governing authority. So who do you know like that? And the answer is anybody who's ever moved internationally.

So now I'd like to take a few moments to share with you my experiences as being an American in Canada. [Laughter]. So I first moved to Canada, cause this is what happens right, is you move from one authority and one cultural background and you're adopting a new one. And there's this period between what was and what is and is to come, that you feel this <grunts> tension. So, the tension is described probably in my experience when I first arrived on these blessed shores and I had to go to ICBC to get my car insurance. And I went in there, I answered all the questions, and the person looked at me and said, “This is what you want, this amount.” And I looked at it and said, “Well that's, for a year, right?” And they said, “No, that's a month. That's for the month.” And I said, “What? You need to crunch those numbers again. Cause there's no way that's the amount. Like unless you guys are stealing from people.” So we had like, half an hour conversation about the—they crunched numbers, and said, “I don't need to crunch the numbers again. This is what the computer just told me. And the



computer belongs to the government. And this is what they want you to pay to drive here.” And I was like, the next thirty minutes, I was pacing around the office talking about my philosophy of government, right? Like it’s outrageous. Do you guys know what the market is? Come on, everywhere else I’ve lived—You see, so there’s a new governing authority, and I’m trying to get used to what it looks like. But there’s that old impulse, and I live between. And so I’m <growls>...frustrated about it.

When I first arrived too, there’s a guy who—I was at my house and I walked out in the front and this young guy walked up to me. I didn’t know him, and he handed me a newspaper. I was like, “Why...no. I don’t want that.” He said, “But it’s yours.” I said, “I didn’t order it.” And he said, “No, no, no. Everybody gets the newspaper here.” And I said, “Really? What a country! This is amazing! You guys—I get the newspaper.” I mean...and then I read it. [Laughter] I realized why it was free. But at the Railside Bend, you have to pay for the newspaper. But here you get it. So, I still have this weird tension when it comes to my front door. Do I want this? Do I not want this?

I was in a meeting here at the church, I remember sitting there and there was a question that was asked by one of our pastors for discussion. And all—everyone was silent. And you know the American in me was like, “Well jump in there and get into the fray.” Right? But everybody else was super quiet for a while. And so finally, I said something, and a couple of people said a few other things and they came to a conclusion. It was only like, three people who talked. And I thought, “Oh, nobody must care about this.” I remember walking out of the office and hearing just in every little office, little conversations being had about that question and how they thought about this, and this thought about this. And I was like [mouth gasps], so my Australian friend Tim was there, and I asked, I said to him, “What in the world is this?” And he said, “Aw, mate.” And he put his arm right around, “<Australian accent> Aw, mate. Welcome to Canada. </accent>” Right? There’s different rules. There’s different cultural expectations and ways that you go about things that you’re not used to.

And that, you know, if you’ve ever lived anywhere different there’s this tension that you feel between what you were, and what you are. And that’s what Paul’s describing here. Listen, you were of the flesh. That’s the way you used to live. That’s the former manner of your life. But now, in Christ, you are of the spirit. And so there’s a new manner of life and there’s this tension that’s constantly at work inside of you. It’s like you’re a dog being called in two different directions. I say that, my sister and I used to compete for the affections of our dog, Paddy, right? Put Paddy in the middle, and I’d be on one side and Megan on the other. And I say, “Come, Paddy. Come, come, come.” Paddy never came to. Always went to Megan because I didn’t care about the dog. Until I got sick of losing in this little battle. So I would quietly feed the dog behind Megan’s back. So, I ended up winning all the time. Right? All the time. But that’s the image. That’s the way it works. There, you’re like a dog stuck between two owners who’s calling your name, you know? Megan the flesh, Jeff the Spirit, right? Come, this way, come this way. And you know that feeling inside of you, yes? You say, “I want a third way.” There is no third way! So Paul says here, in fact, he says that they’re in conflict with each other so that you are not to do whatever you want. You don’t get to do whatever you want. You either serve flesh, or you serve Spirit. So which is it gonna be?



I remember when I first came to faith. And you know, Christian, you know... You know what I'm talking about. You know that tension. And you're tempted to do something and you fight against it. Sounds like the voice of the Spirit, and sometimes you want to do the good, the other thing's calling out. When I first became a Christian, I was early in my high school years. And I remember, I had an anger issue before I came to faith in Christ. So it was not uncommon for me to be in a desktop here or there. I remember being in a mall with some of my friends. Okay, I came to faith just a few months before and I was in a mall with some of my friends. And we saw some other friends from our school but they were like, frenemies, right? The other group of guys who were competing for the interest of the girls. And they were walking by us, and we walk by them. One of the guys, guy named Tommy, looked at me and said, <mean voice> "What are you looking at?" You know. And you know, I'm not gonna let that go. So I said, "You know what I'm looking at." And I walked right up to him, and you know you get really close to—I used to do this thing you get really close to his face and <slowly exhales> you know, just breathe. He got mad. And he pushes me, and he starts <angry sounds> beaking at me, and he was just beaking at me and his shoulder was back and his chin was out there. Like, just sitting out there, <angry grunts>, right? But there was—now, before I was a Christian, there's no—like, you're getting hit. But I felt myself go <sharp inhale>, and the inside of me there was this, "No, don't do it." And I had not experience that before. I was like, wait a minute. What do you mean, don't do it? But I wanted to do it. <calm voice> But don't do it. <angry voice> I...wanna...do it. <calm voice> Don't do it...—So I did it. I ended up punching it away. He got back up off the ground, and I ran into a flower store. No joke, actually. I went into a flower store and I hid there until he totally left. You know that tension inside of you, though. That's what I'm talking about. That's what Paul's talking about. what you used to be and what you are now. And it's like <strained voice> "Oooh.. what do I—"

### **[What Happens When You Side with the Flesh?]**

So what happens if you choose the — what happens if you punch the guy? What happens if you choose the dark dog? Well, Galatians 15:19-21,

"The acts of the flesh are obvious [I don't need to tell you about them, guys. I'm gonna make a list, like they're clear]: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like [Just like, the end of it. Guys a whole bunch of other ones like, could've list it here but I got tired]. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

So he ranges this list in kind of four categories of sin. One category is a sexual sins, another religious sins, another relational sins, then finally kind of lack of self control sins. So let's look at each one for a second.

First of all, sexual sins. It is interesting that he starts the list with the term sexual immorality, is it not? Like the sins of the flesh, the acts of the flesh are obvious, I mean like, sexual immorality. Everyone's



like, “Oh yeah, we know that one.” Cause we do know that one. He uses the word here, the Greek word, porneia. Does that sound familiar? Porneia, it’s a catch-all term, it refers to all kinds of sexual misconduct; from adultery to homosexual acts, to pedophilia, to... all sorts of whatever you can think of, that’s porneia. And he starts with it because he’s basically saying, “You know, mostly the flesh really wants to develop in you sexual misconduct.” And isn’t that the way our culture works these days? I mean, the age that’s passing away is constantly yelling to us, “Man, if you want to be happy, just do whatever you want sexually...I mean as long as there’s consent. But mostly just embrace yourself.” And yet the call of the Spirit is so different isn’t it? Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. You’re actually sexually broken and you need to submit yourself to the authority of God who has your best intentions at heart. “No! That’s not the case.” says the flesh. “Your best intentions are your intentions. Don’t let anybody judge you.” So sexual sins.

Religious sins, you notice he uses idolatry and witchcraft. Now, you and I read stuff like idolatry and think, “Yeah that’ sounds like something an animistic cultures.” But an idol is anything we look to in order to provide for us the joy only God can provide. I’m gonna say that again. An idol is anything we look to to provide for us the joy that only God can provide. And so, what do we have when we have somebody coming and worshipping an idol? They bring their orange and they’re going to feed the idol. There’s the idol there who represents their god and they come before and they lay the orange in a little basket before them and they bow down before the idol. Maybe say a prayer. And what are they doing? They’re saying, “Listen, idol. Listen, o great god represented by the idol. I want to enter into a contract with you. I’m going to give you things, expensive things, time, energy, worship. I’m going to give you all of this stuff and in return, you’re going to give me happiness.” So what we call it “quid pro quo” arrangement with the idol. You and I look at that and we think, “Of course. That’s right. That’s what they do. We don’t have idols.” Really? We don’t have anything we look to to provide for us the joy that only God can provide. So, fill in the blank for me here. I will be truly happy if I have...blank. I will be truly happy if I have...money. I will be truly happy if I have...successful children. I will be truly happy if I have...hair. I will be truly happy if I have... a husband, or a spouse. Or I will be truly happy if I have another different spouse. I will be truly happy if I have this thing. And we give all of our energy to that thing, that blank-filling thing. We give everything we’ve got because we think that if we get it, we’ll be truly happy. What do you call that? We call that idolatry.

Sexual sins and religious sins, and relational sins. Notice the sheer number of relational sins that he lists here. Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy. This is probably Paul’s big concern with the Galatian church. He’s essentially saying to them, “Look guys, the other stuff you probably struggle with. But this stuff especially is where the flesh shows up in your life.” It shouldn’t surprise you that Christian people struggle with enthroning their opinion and then forming factions and arguing with each other. Yes? So this week I was talking to a friend who actually does reconciliation meetings within churches. So he’ll go into a church that’s dying and he’ll try to—they call it the “solemn assembly” when he gets together and they all come together and they share their feelings and forgiveness. They ask for forgiveness from each other. I said, “Can you give me a couple of examples though of some of the ways that people have enthroned their opinions in the church?” And he said, “Oh, I’ve got a couple of really good ones.” So here’s the first.



He said, "There's one church that I went to try to help out, they actually were dividing over a walnut tree." I said, "What? A walnut—"

"Yeah. So there's this walnut tree on the property like 300 year old walnut tree that was threatening the structure of the church itself, right? So when the wind would blow it would kind of look like it was gonna come down. Some branches had come down recently, so it wasn't a healthy tree. They had the arborist to have a look at it. So the leader said, "Look, we need to cut the tree down." But a few people in the congregation were like, "No! You don't! My grandpapi professed his love to my grandmami under that tree! There's like a heart and their initials on it! It's history! You wanna ruin history? It's on God's property and environmentalism!" Used anything they could to try to argue that this tree needed to stay. The leaders kept pushing it, they kept pushing back, they had several meetings about it until one deacon decided to take matters into his own hands. And so under the dark of night, he went out there with his chainsaw <chainsaw noise>, he cut the tree down! Right? Which is of course the greatest sin ever. And so half of the church was freaking out, and the other half was like, "Good for you!", you know. Blowup!"

Another example was a guy that my friend said, I met him, he was near the church that I was doing this reconciliation stuff with. And I was just walking down the street and this guy was standing in his driveway, I said to him, "Hi how are you doing?"

The guy said, "Good."

"Do you know anything about the church over here?"

"Yeah. I know a lot of things about the church. I used to go there." "Oh. Do you not go now?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, let me tell you why. 15 years ago or so, I bought a piano. And I told them I want that piano to go on the left side of the stage. And they said, 'No, it's better on the right.' And I said, 'Left.' And they said 'Right.' And then I wrote a letter saying, 'Left.' And they responded with a letter that said, 'Right.' So I left and I'm never going back."

Really? Over a piano? Now, I tell you these ones because they're kind of goofy. But I tell you, I've been around the church long enough to know that this is like our favourite thing to do. Dissension. Factions. Party spirit, that's exactly what Paul's describing here. What do you call that? And he says, "Well that's acts of the flesh." Well, big deal, acts of the flesh. So what? We show those acts of the flesh, big deal. What if we get entrenched in all those things, it's not that big of deal. Really? Have you noticed the warning? Did you notice the warning? At the end of Galatians 5:21,

"I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

In other words, I don't care how much you talk about how Christian you are, I don't care how much money you give to the church and how much you attend the church. If the acts of the flesh define your life, you're not what you claim to be. Now I gotta clarify that. He's not saying, "Hey listen if you ever have any dissension with anybody ever, you're not a Christian." What he's saying though, he uses the



word “live”, “those who live like this”. It’s a present tense. Those who are living like this. Like this is the manner of their life. This is the way we would describe them. What marks them. Is if it’s acts of the flesh, again, it doesn’t matter what you say. The proof is in the pudding. Whenever I say this in this church or other churches I’m always surprised how many people like go, <grunted voice> “Mmm.. I don’t think so.” So I’m gonna dog pile you with the Bible when it comes to this. To try to show you what I mean. That confession without action means false confession. So James 2:14-17,19,

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith [the deed-less kind] save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it [What good is it for that person? I have the means to care for you, I see the need you have, but I’m gonna pray for you. What good is it for them]? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead...You believe that there is one God [That’s an orthodox statement of belief from the Old Testament. So the people of Israel would repeat it over and over again. So you’re orthodox. You love your doctrinal statements]. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

So in other words, if your faith is profession only and is not matched by actions, basically is as good as a demon. That’s what James is saying. Cause they don’t submit to the authority of God in life. They just talk a good game. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 6, this is in the context of Christians having lawsuits with each other. And Paul is incensed by it. It’s ridiculous! You guys can’t sort this out? You’re gonna judge the angels one day, but you can’t sort out fights between yourselves? Instead you wrong each other. What he says in, 1 Corinthians 6:8-10,

“Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters [The people for whom Christ died!]. Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: [Right? Don’t lie to yourselves, don’t think you’re okay if you just have some profession and it’s not matched by your actions. Don’t be deceived] Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Seems to me, quite honestly, that there’s a lot of “deceived” Christians, who think that by uttering a few words here and there, hey it’s all good man. But Paul’s warning you. That if the acts of the flash mark you, you’re not what you claim.

### **[What Happens When You Side with the Spirit]**

So what happens then if you choose the spirit? So that was bad news right? The acts of the flesh and choosing the flesh. What happens when you choose the spirit? Well, there’s also fruit that shows up, evidence of it that shows up. Galatians 5:22-23,





“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

So you're hiking down your forest path out there in the Okanagan, and you eventually come out to a clearing and there are some trees over there. And you think, “I wonder what kind of trees there are.” And you walk over to them and you noticed that there are these round red things at the end and you say, “Apple tree! In the Okanagan! Crazy!” You can tell the tree by its fruit.

That's Jesus. That's what he said. You can tell a tree by its fruit. You can tell that it's a flesh tree because sexual immorality and dissensions and discord and... And you can tell if it's a spirit tree, a genuine Christian tree, you can tell if it displays...what? Well love, and by that he means a kind of self sacrificial giving of yourself for others regardless of the cost kind of love. That's what marks Christian people. I was reading this week about like, Christian history. And so I was reading this week about the plague of Cyprian in 251 AD. The plague of Cyprian was one of the most dangerous plague that took over the Roman empire in the early days. The disease that people were catching was so contagious that you had pretty much a 50-50 chance if you came in contact with it. So half the people came in contact with it died. And in these really crowded cities in the Roman empire, what you did is, you'd say “Listen, I don't want to take the risk of getting sick. And so if my spouse or my children or my brother or sister have this disease, the first thing we do is we push them out the door.” So that's the way you quarantine, is if you kick them out into the streets. Take all your stuff, and get out. The aristocrats and the rich people and the government officials, they all took off into the country to their other houses, leaving behind all of their sick relatives to die. You know what the Christians did during this time? They would walk down the streets and they would collect the sick people and bring them to their houses. They died for it, many of them. Now that's what Christians do. You know when people shoot up your mosque in your city, the Christians show up to lend a hand. That's what Christians do. We're children of our Father in heaven who makes the rain fall on the just and the unjust alike, that's what Christians were marked, by love.

And joy. You know what I mean by joy, not happiness. You know, not like a plastic smile on your face, <cringed voice> “I'm so joyful right now!” Not that. So much as a settled state of mind because we know that God loves us. My mother in law is one of my favourite people on the world because no matter what happens in her life, she has a little statement that she gives when she can't manage it anymore. She'll sigh and say, <sighs> with something heavy happening in her life or she hears about something heavy, she'll go <heavy sigh> “The Lord is good.” Right. The Lord is good. I've been in African churches before where they say, that's the way they start their church services. “The Lord is good.” And the people respond, “All the time.” And the other say, “All the time.” “The Lord is good.” All the time. Even when you can't see it in front, that's what joy is! It's a knowledge that even though I don't understand what's going on right now God, I know that beyond this moment, there is a future that is imminently friendly.

Love, joy, peace. A commitment to harmony with one another. I've gotten into another fight in my life. When I was in college I lived with a bunch of guys in the house, seven guys, we called it “Xanadu”. So



in this house, my friend Jeff, I was Jeff and he was Jeff. He was sitting on the couch one day, and I was sitting on the floor. And we were talking about—I don't even know what we were talking about. But I said something to make him mad, which is not surprising at all. I had my glasses on cause I was studying. And he was sitting on the couch, and he said, "Say it again." And I'm sure I said it again. And he just, he just, you know, gyms, and super flushed. Off the top row, that's an 80's wrestling reference there for you. So like he off the top row. Hulk Hogan-ly, boom. I remember saying to him out loud while he jumped on me, I was on the ground and I said, "Wait, wait, wait. Just let me take my glasses off!" Right? So I took my glasses off and I put it over here. "Okay, let's go!" So we were going for it on the ground and one of our friends pulled him off of me and I...He went up to his room which is upstairs, "<angry gibberish>" He said to me. And I responded, "<angry gibberish>", you know. Whatever... Went to my room, he was in his room. And I was sitting there on my bed, angry at him. How dare he. But there was inside of me, this like, "You know Jeff, peace should mark you." I just felt this—I felt really burdened that I had done something here to force him to do this to me. And so, anyway, reluctantly got up and trudge myself out. Walked over to the stairway. And he was coming down at the same time. And at the same time, we said to each other, "Jeff, I'm sorry." It occurred to me later. And then he said, "Do you want to play a video game?" Yes, we did. But it occurred to me later, isn't that the way it works with Christians is it? I cannot guarantee you that you would not have a dust up with your friends. I promise you in fact, you probably will at some point or another. But what marks Christians is that we're not okay with acrimony. We're not okay with taking our ball and going home. We have to sort it out. We forgive as we've been forgiven. That's what marks us, love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, goodness, self control. Against these things there is no law. So in other words, what is the spirit going to produce in your life? Those things. Such a difference, flesh and Spirit right?

### **[How to Win the Fight]**

So here's the big question you have to finish with here. How do you win it? How do you choose the Spirit? Well I want to take you back to verse 16 to answer that question. Notice what he says at the very beginning of this, he says, Galatians 5:16,

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

The Greek there is what we call "Ou mey", it's the most negative form of a statement. Walk by the Spirit, and you will absolutely not, you will in no way gratify the desires of the flesh. So what's the secret to not gratifying the desires of flesh? Walking by the spirit. Well what does that look like?

You know it's interesting the Apostle Paul everywhere he writes, and he gives a command. If he gives a command for a thing, he always grounds that command in a statement of fact. He always grounds the imperative—what you should do, with an indicative—who you are. So you were once darkness and now you're light in the Lord—statement of who you are; live as children of light. You are in the Spirit, he's the governing authority over your life—that's what's true about you. So walk by the Spirit.



So this, this is his secret to obeying God. He says, “You need to focus on the indicatives, and then let them lead to the imperative.” What do I mean by that.

Okay, let’s just real practically speaking there. There you are in the middle of your basement and the curtains are all drawn and it’s late at night, and you’re struggling because you have a computer and you’re thinking about looking at pornography. In this one moment, you feel inside of you this tension between Spirit and flesh calling you. You know you don’t want to, and yet it’s so appealing and you’re fighting back and forth. So what do you do? Well, you start by recognizing who you are, with the indicative. Who am I? Well, I can give you some things, I’m free. The master called the flesh does not own you any longer. You’ve been delivered from his clutches. You don’t need to answer that call, in fact you were bought with a price. You have a new master, who calls you to honour him with your body. Because he purchased you. You’re never alone. You think you’re alone, but the Spirit is indwelling you. That’s what’s true about you. That everything you look at, the Spirit is seeing. And everything you do, the Spirit is witnessing. Those are all true statements about you. Those are indicatives. What should you do then? Live in light of them. I am not somebody who needs to give into this, I’m bought with a price. So I’m gonna honour God with my body. And you make a phone call to a friend, and you go out public, and you just get out of there, man.

Okay, what about if I’m fighting self loathing. Which is something that most of don’t tell each other that we fight, but we all do. My bum’s too big, my nose is too big, I don’t have enough hair. Whatever it is, the thing that you look at, and you think, “Ugh...It’s just horrible and...I’m embarrassed about it. And I gotta cover it up, and fix it in order for everyone to like me.” And you accuse yourself. You remember all the times in your life that people have told you about that particular thing. So you’ve come to believe that you are defined by that. So what do you do? No, you start with the indicatives. What is true about you? Well, first of all, you’re a child of the King. You’re a daughter or son of the living God and the way you got that way, was God choosing you, despite all of your failings. Despite all of the things that he could look at and think, “Ew...” He picked you and he’s not really sad about picking you, he delights in it. And even though you’re not perfect now, and you’re not. He’s taking real delight in forming Christ in you. He enjoys the victory. He cares deeply about everything you currently care about. He’s taking joy in molding you, he said that you’re fearfully and wonderfully made. These are the indicatives. These are the true statements. So what do you do? You tell those voices to shut up. Cause they’re not true. Shut up, flesh.

What if I worry all the time? Okay, we start with what’s true. What’s true? Well you have a sovereign God who not only can control everything and does control everything. He has a particular interest in you. He loves you, he says, and he’s going to work everything out according to the counsel of his will for your good, and His glory. There’s nothing in all creation that will separate you from the love of Christ. So no matter what it is that you’re going to be facing, the thing you’re worried about? God’s going to work it out for your good. That’s what’s true. So what do you do? You give it over to God. You live in light of it. You said, “Listen, I’m not gonna worry. I’m not gonna take this on my back. I’m not equipped for it.”



You say, “Man, all of that sounds like, it sounds hard. It sounds like it’s a fight.” And I’m like, yes! It’s a fight. But it’s a winnable fight. See, you can feed the right dog. Walk by the Spirit and you will in no way gratify the desires of the flesh.

Let me pray for us. Father I’m thankful for your grace and for this passage and for it rounding off this series on the Holy Spirit. And Spirit, would you empower us to do what’s described here. We don’t want to gratify the desires of the flesh, Father. We want our lives to be marked by the fruit of the Spirit. Would you make it so? Despite us, we pray, would you make it so. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.