

Inner Struggles

Lesson for August 6, 2023

Unit III: God's Eternal Reign

Scriptural Background: Galatians 5:13-26

Printed Text: Galatians 5:16-26

Key verse: *“You, my brothers, and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”* (Galatians 5:13, NIV)

The freedom Christ promises, is not without a daily war or conflict within us between submitting to the leadership of the Spirit or the submitting to the desires of the flesh.

Have you ever gone to a different or foreign area? How did you navigate it? Life is somewhat similar. Think about being on a tour or marching in line with someone else. When you're on a tour, you go exactly where the tour guide goes. They have experience in the area they are taking you through while you do not. The best way to avoid getting lost is to follow them closely.

Likewise, since the Holy Spirit is God, He knows God's ways pretty well. Sure, you can try to navigate your relationship with God without the Spirit, but you would only get lost. Instead, if you follow the Spirit closely, you'll stay on the right track.

Choose to follow the “tour guide” the Spirit of God.

Key Terms

1. **Contrary** (verse 17) – A fact or condition incompatible with another. Down from; over against.
2. **Desires** (verse 17) — Lusts after; longs for; covets.
3. **Drunkenness** (verse 21) — Intoxication.
4. **Idolatry** (verse 20) — The worship of false gods.
5. **Impurity** (verse 19) — Uncleaness, physically or morally.
6. **Indulge the flesh** – To yield to the desire of the flesh. Satisfy; gratify; become content.
7. **Inherit** (verse 21) — To be an heir; to receive an allotted portion; receive as one's own.
8. **Patience** (verse 22) — Longsuffering; forbearance.
9. **Reveling** (verse 21) — Drunken behavior
10. **Strife** (verse 20) — Contention; wrangling; quarrels; dissensions.
11. **Walk** (verse 16) — To tread all around, make one's way; conduct life.

Lesson Background

The apostle Paul challenged the believers of his day to learn what every believer today would do well to remember: the key to making progress in the realm of Christian freedom is to keep walking in the Spirit.

Paul is very much aware of the Galatians' need for a power that the law could not give. He realized from personal experience (see Romans 7), that there are some things the law cannot do (8:3). Rules and regulations can command, but they cannot empower one to do what is commanded. Rules and regulations serve as a guide or a road map, but they cannot motivate and enable one to follow the direction and guidance given.

If the Galatians were to live free from sin's power to control their lives, if they were to fulfill the law, it would be because they surrendered themselves to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Only those who have surrendered and who keep on surrendering themselves to the complete control of the Spirit are empowered to walk according to the Spirit's orders.

Paul was convinced of the Spirit's sufficiency to guide and strengthen believers to live righteously. Moreover, he was convinced that the Spirit is always present to guide and strengthen believers in their warfare against the desires of the flesh. Paul's message to Galatians called them to be careful to follow the marching orders of the Spirit. Those who march by the Spirit's orders will not—and indeed cannot—fulfill the desires of the flesh. “This I say then,” wrote Paul, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16)

Lesson Background

There was a very specific issue in the Roman province of Galatia that prompted Paul to write about keeping in step with the Spirit. Certain people from Jerusalem came to Galatia and told the Gentile believers that in order to be right with God, they needed to be circumcised according to the Jewish law. This was literally antithetical to the gospel. Becoming in right standing with God comes through Christ and then the Spirit enables us to live righteously.

Today's lesson begins in the midst of Paul's attempt to convince the Galatians to not become enslaved by the Law, which—unlike the Holy Spirit—was not intended to save, but rather to shed light on sin (Romans 3:20). Paul informs the Galatians that those led by the Spirit (i.e., those under the continual guidance of and in abiding relationship with the Spirit) are no longer subject to the Law, nor can be condemned by it (Romans 8:1).

The Lesson in Depth

I. Freedom (Galatians 5:13–16)

Through the Galatians' faith in Christ, they were called to freedom. The Spirit calls believers to live in the freedom that Jesus gives, rather than in bondage to sin and the law. Freedom is, in its essence, the ability to make choices. Slaves do not get to make choices, they simply do as they are told. This is an essential element of the grace of God. Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross made every believer righteous in God's presence, and gave them power over sin. But every believer still has a daily choice whether to walk in the resurrection power of Jesus or in the power of their old nature, the flesh. Each believer, from Paul's time until now, can walk in one of two ways. One is to walk in love, the other to turn freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.

Although believers are made righteous in the sight of God, and given the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, all believers still have an old nature, which Paul calls the flesh. Paul says in Romans 7:18 that nothing good dwells in our flesh. Even so, we can still exercise our freedom to choose by choosing to obey the flesh. That does not mean we will be made unrighteous in the sight of God. It is impossible to undo Jesus' work on the cross by our behavior.

What does it mean then? It means when believers choose the flesh they will have the fruits of the flesh, the results or consequences of walking according to the flesh. Paul warns the Galatians that if they follow the flesh they will *bite and devour* one another because they will be consumed with selfish desires rather than a love for one another.

When believers choose the flesh, it means they will not only *bite and devour one another*, but perhaps even be *consumed by one another*. That is not a good outcome, to say the least. Paul acknowledges the amazing freedom to choose that God grants every believer. But he also acknowledges that God made consequences for our actions; we will reap what we sow.

The contrast to making a poor choice, to *carry out the desire of the flesh*, is to make a good choice, to *walk in the Spirit*. What does that look like? When believers *through love serve one another*. Believers who walk by the Spirit won't carry out the *desires of the flesh*. The Spirit and the flesh are direct enemies; we can't pursue one and also follow the other. We get to choose, but our choice is binary. We can either obey the flesh or the Spirit. There is not a third option. Paul will make clear that following religious rules in order to seek to be justified is following the flesh.

Paul is telling the Galatians not to use their freedom to choose to follow the sinful desires of the flesh but to instead obey the Spirit by serving each other through love. This is what living by faith produces. Even the law could be summed up as this service to each other: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. The competing Jewish "authorities" want to appeal to the law? Fine, the law says to walk in love. That's how to fulfill the law. Even their own appeal to the law is defeated by the law. This verse *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*, comes from Leviticus 19:18. Leviticus is from the section of the Old Testament that was referred to as the law.

The problem is not the law. The problem is that "law-keeping" is a "self-improvement" approach. And the flesh cannot be improved. That is why Paul advises believers to crucify the flesh daily.

The Spirit is also not under the law, just as Paul showed the Galatians in chapter 2. When Peter ate with the Gentiles, he was following the Spirit, not the law. And when he withdrew from the Galatians he was not walking in the Spirit (recall: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*) but instead trying to obey man's version of the law. As Paul argues in Romans 7:14, the Law of God is spiritual and good, but we are carnal. That is how we turn something meant for good into something bad.

Paul's point is that the flesh and the Spirit are complete opposites. Our most fundamental choice as believers is choosing each day, each moment, which to obey.

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh: Simply put, if we walk in the Spirit (instead of trying to live by the law), we naturally shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Again, the fear of the legalist – that walking in the Spirit gives license to sin, and that only legalism can keep us holy – is just plain wrong.

II. Fleshless (Galatians 5:17–21)

Verse 17 begins with the conjunction “for” to further develop the way that this juxtaposition (flesh versus spirit) unfolds. Paul says, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit.” In other words, the two are diametrically opposed to one another. The flesh is what characterizes our life before we come to faith in Christ. It is our natural, selfish, and sinful propensity to rebel against God. It is cunning and deceiving, lurking underneath the surface, waiting to rear its ugly head when you least expect it. It is influenced by our past and our personalities. This ongoing contest occurs internally and has the potential to lead one into wholesale abdication of the leading of the Spirit. Of course, to do so would signal disaster for the believer, which is precisely what the apostle will articulate in the next few verses yet could also render their ability to respond to the Spirit null and void.

Now the works of the flesh are evident: Paul has just written about the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in every believer. Though it is an interior, invisible battle, the results are outwardly evident. It's almost as if Paul apologizes for having to make this list, because the works of the flesh are evident. Yet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he knows it is important to be specific, because we must know *specifically* how we walk in the flesh. We can't see the flesh, but we can see what it *does*.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness... lewdness: These are all *sensual* sins, relating to sex. We are often appalled at the sexual immorality of our day, but we should remember that the times Paul wrote in were as bad if not worse.

1. **Adultery** is violating the marriage covenant by sexual immorality. This word isn't included in the list of many ancient manuscripts, so many translations (such as the NIV) don't include it.
2. **Fornication** is the ancient Greek word *porneia*, and it speaks of sexual immorality in a broad sense. *Porneia* started out meaning “the use of a prostitute,” but by Paul's day it was “used for a wide variety of sexual sin.” (Morris) Therefore, **fornication** covers “Illicit connection between *single* or *unmarried* persons; yet often signifying *adultery* also.” (Clarke) Webster's dictionary defines **fornication** as “Voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons or two persons not married to each other.” Sex before and outside of marriage – which Paul calls here **fornication** – “was so widespread that it was apparently accepted as a normal part of life.

3. **Uncleanness** is another broad word, referring to sexual impropriety in general. It should be thought of as the *opposite of purity*. If it isn't pure before God, then it is **uncleanness**. Uncleanness also covers impure speech, or suggestive speaking filled with double meanings.
4. **Lewdness** (sometimes translated *licentiousness*) has the idea of "ready to sin at any time." It speaks of someone who flaunts their immorality, throwing off all restraint and having no sense of *shame, propriety, or embarrassment*. Morris defines it as "a disregard of accepted rules... conduct that knows no restraint." Lewdness can be thought of as *public and open* uncleanness. "A man may be *unclean* and hide his sin; he does not become *licentious* until he shocks public decency." (Lightfoot)

Idolatry... sorcery: These are religious sins. They are sins of worship and remind us that it isn't only tragic to worship the wrong God, or seek the wrong spiritual power – it is sinful as well.

1. **Idolatry** is the worship of any god except the LORD God revealed to us by the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. When people serve a god of their own opinion, of their own creation, they reject the true and living God – and that is sin. Someone might say, "Well, I can believe whatever I want!" and they certainly can; but they also bear the consequences of their wrong belief.
2. **Sorcery** (translated witchcraft in the NIV) is the service and worship of occult and spiritual powers apart from the true God. It also has another dimension, revealed by the word for sorcery in the original language Paul uses: *pharmakeia*, from which we get our word for "pharmacy." Morris defines sorcery as "the use of any kind of drugs, potions, or spells." In the ancient world, the taking of drugs (especially hallucinogens) was always associated with the occult.

Hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envies... murders: These are each "people" sins. They are sins that primarily express themselves in how we treat others. God cares about our sexual and moral purity, and He cares about the purity of our religion and worship. But He also passionately cares about how we treat one another. The fact that Paul uses more words to describe these interpersonal sins shows how important our treatment of each other is to God.

1. **Hatred** (*ekthra*) is an attitude of heart, and it somehow expresses itself in actions such as contentions, outbursts of wrath, or many other works of the flesh. But hatred is the inner motivation for the ill treatment of others. Just as love is the inner motivation for the kind and good treatment of others, hatred is an inner motivation. Laws can be passed to punish the evil that men do against each other; but no law can answer the problem of hatred, which motivates those acts. But the Holy Spirit never led anyone into hatred.
2. **Contentions** translates the ancient Greek word (*eris*). "Originally, this word had mainly to do with the rivalry for prizes... it means the rivalry which has found its outcome in quarreling and wrangling." (Barclay) Most commonly it is translated as strife (as in Romans 13:13 and 1 Corinthians 3:3), and simply speaks of a combative and argumentative spirit.

3. **Jealousies** translates an ancient Greek word (*zelos*) that is sometimes used in a positive sense – as for being zealous for something good. But here, clearly, the connotation is wrong. In this context it means “the desire to have what someone else has, wrong desire for what is not for us.” (Barclay)
4. **Outbursts of wrath** translates an ancient Greek word (*thumos*) that speaks of a sudden flash of anger, not a settled state of anger. It means to lose your temper, being unable to control your anger.
5. **Selfish ambitions** translates the ancient Greek word (*eritheia*). It started out as a perfectly respectable word meaning “to work for pay.” Over time, it began to mean the kind of work that is done for money and for no other reason. Then it was used to describe politicians who campaign for election, not for what service they can give to the government and the people, but only for their own glory and benefit. “It ended up meaning ‘selfish ambition’, the ambition which has no conception of service and whose only aims are profit and power.” It is the heart of a person whose first question is always, “What’s in it for me?”
6. **Dissensions** translates the ancient Greek word (*dichostasia*), and it literally means “standing apart.” Romans 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 3:3 translate this word as divisions. “Dissension describes a society... where the members fly apart instead of coming together.” (Barclay)
7. **Heresies** translates an ancient Greek word (*hairesis*) which originally simply meant “to choose.” Over time, it came to mean someone who divisively expressed their “choices” or opinions. We think today of heresies in terms of wrong ideas and teachings; but the emphasis in the word is actually the wrongful dividing over opinions. Heresies can be thought of as hardened dissensions. “There is all the difference in the world between believing that we are right and believing that everyone is wrong. Unshakable conviction is a Christian virtue; unyielding intolerance is a sin.” (Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, cited in Morris)
8. **Envy** is the ancient Greek word (*phthonos*). It doesn’t so much want what someone else has (as in jealousies), but it is bitter just because someone else has something and we don’t. The ancient Stoics called this “grief at someone else’s good,” and the ancient philosopher Euripides said it was “the greatest of all diseases among men.”
9. **Murders** translates the ancient Greek word (*phonos*), which is well translated by the English word murders. This is another word (like adultery) that is not in every ancient Greek text and isn’t included in translations such as the NIV.

Drunkness... revelries: These can be thought of as social sins – sins that are often committed in the company of other people. The fact that Paul includes these two sins in his list shows that they were works of the flesh that the Galatian Christians had to be on guard against. Romans 13:12-13 lists drunkness and revelries as part of the Christians’ past of darkness that now need to be cast off as we walk in the light.

1. **Drunkness** is clearly described as one of the works of the flesh. While Christians may differ as to if a Christian can drink alcohol, the Scriptures precisely forbid drunkness. We must not think that only being “falling down drunk” is a sin; but being impaired in

any way by drink is sin, as well as drinking with the intention of becoming impaired. Ephesians 5:18 also describes drunkenness as dissipation, which means “wastefulness.” Getting drunk is a waste; Trapp writes of drinking “all the three outs” – “that is, ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head.”

2. **Revelries**, translating the ancient Greek word (*komos*), doesn’t mean simply having a party or a good time. It means unrestrained partying. Barclay says, “It describes the kind of revelry which lowers a man’s self and is a nuisance to others.”

And the like: This demonstrates that Paul understands that his list is not exhaustive. These are not the only works of the flesh. It isn’t as if one could find a work of the flesh that is not described in this list, then one would be free to do it.

We are powerless to resist and overcome the flesh in our own strength. But the good news is that the Spirit is also exerting his influence in our lives. The Spirit is persistent and relentless in his influence. He is opposing the desires of the flesh. Much of this is not seen nor felt but He is working. He does this two ways. First by changing the desires of our heart and secondly by exerting his influence over our hearts so that we will more and more be swayed and won over by the Spirit. We will only overcome the flesh by the Spirit given new and greater desires and by submitting to the impulses and promptings of the Spirit.

The work of the Spirit is three things: *intimate*, *internal*, and it is *inevitable*. By intimate means relational. He is a person, a member of the trinity. God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, always working together in unity as One. The Spirit is not just powerful but personal. You are following His lead, listening to his voice. He is the battery for the Christian life, but He is also a person. When you follow his lead and listen to his voice, you are following Christ because He is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). You tap His power through your relationship with Christ. Second, the work of the Spirit is internal. Real faith produces real fruit. But because it is internal it cannot necessarily be measured easily. It is gradual and over time; very rarely dramatic. It is organic. We often do not see the change until the pressures of life come and we see what we are made of. Last, it is inevitable. You will be made holy; you will be conformed to the image of Christ. When we see Him, we will become like Him (1 John 3:2). You can resist it, fight it, but in the end, He wins because He promises.

III. Fruitful (Galatians 5:22–26)

Contrasting the vices, Paul now shares the virtues that promote holiness and wholeness within the community of faith. The nine virtues listed here can be explained in triads in the order that they appear. **Love, joy, and peace all function as virtues that are displayed within the individual.** They grow internally like roots, below the surface, deeply rooted in the life of the believer. These are inner-oriented virtues that foster a type of wholeness by showing concrete expression in the face of adversity.

1. The first fruit listed is **love** and is the primary way in which God deals with his people and characterizes the Christian life. Love is the overflow of our life in Christ because God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

2. **Joy** is also a characteristic of the Christian life. It is not emotional as much as it is confidence in God and his love for us because of what he has done in the cross, making us his children. It is the confidence that he is present in our lives and working for our good even in the most terrible circumstances. So, James 1:2-4, can tell us to rejoice in trials because you know that God uses them to shape our faith.
3. **Peace** is the freedom from anxiety, stress, or worry, when life is turbulent or not going your way. It leads to peace in our relationships.

The second triad, **longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness, represent fruit of an outward-orientation, or how we interact with others.** These virtues allow the Christian to hold up under cruel pressure, to act with calm respect toward others, and generally display the wholesomeness acquired by the first triad of virtues.

The next two, long suffering and kindness, are the passive and active sides of love.

4. Love is expressed in **long suffering** (ESV patience) toward difficult people and circumstances. It may even be with those who oppose you.
5. **Kindness** is the active side of love (Luke 6:35). It is a gracious disposition toward difficult people.
6. **Goodness** is acting morally good because you have taken on the moral goodness of God. When we come to faith in Christ, we partake of the moral nature of God (2 Peter 1:4).

This final triad—**faith, meekness, and temperance** — **represents the fruit of self-mastery.** Each one demonstrates the loyal responsibility of the Christian to act in accordance with the Spirit of God. What benefit do these virtues add to the believer's life?

7. To begin, **faith** represents the act or attitude of believing, and underscores an idea of God's trustworthiness. God has proven His trustworthy character to believers throughout all time, so it should not surprise readers to find this virtue affirmed here.
8. **Meekness, or gentleness,** produces great benefits for the believer in Christ Jesus particularly in the realm of undeserved criticism and also demonstrates itself in the realm of anger as one who possesses meekness tends to rein in their anger even in situations when it would be an appropriate response.
9. **Self-control** (KJV: temperance) is a characteristic of those guided by the Spirit rather than the impulsiveness of the flesh. Even though Paul does not often explicitly use this word, he places it here among the highest virtues, because when all the theology and guidelines Paul explains at length in his letters are enacted, they often look like simple self-control

The fruit of the Spirit is the result of the Spirits' continual transforming power upon our hearts by the God given means of grace, including Spirit empowered crucifying sinful tendencies. Four truths about the nature of spiritual fruit:

1. Spiritual fruit comes from the spiritual character/nature of the individual. A tree produces fruit that is consistent with its character. That is why Paul says what he does in verse 21; it points to the spiritual condition of the person. If your life is generally

- characterized by the flesh, the old sinful nature, then you have probably not come to saving faith in Christ (exception is spiritual infants; 1 Corinthians 3:1).
2. The fruit are characteristics of God (except self-control). This makes sense since we participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and Paul tells us to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1) because we are his children.
 3. Spiritual fruit is a gradual growing process over the course of our lives (Matthew 13:23). We are told that God forms Christ in us (Galatians 4:19) and promised that we will be conformed to the character of Christ (Romans 8:29). We are not the primary agent in spiritual fruit being produced in our lives.
 4. We are not passive in producing fruit. We are commanded to do each of these fruit in the New Testament – we are to love, rejoice, be at peace, etc.

How is fruit produced in our lives? What or who is the primary factor? The Bible describes the dynamic of the work of the Spirit overcoming the work of the flesh in our lives as crucifixion.

There are three ways the flesh is crucified: God has crucified our flesh when we come to faith (Galatians 2:20); we crucified our flesh when we came to faith by repenting (Galatians 5:24). From both perspectives, the divine and human, the flesh has been dethroned, removed as the primary master in our lives. But here is the catch – it has been dethroned but not destroyed; it has been removed but remains. It is crippled and desperate like any wounded animal fights for its life. So that leads us to the third way the flesh is crucified. We must constantly and consistently renounce the flesh (Romans 6:6; 8:13; Colossians 3:8-10) saying no to its desires and embrace Christ as better.

1. Crucifying the flesh must be ruthless; take no pity on your enemy who wages war on your soul. Do not coddle or play with sin.
2. Crucifying the flesh is painful. Crucifixion was the most painful way to die in the Ancient Near East. It was done to humiliate and torture criminals.
3. Crucifixion is decisive. Crucifixion was a slow but certain death. Paul ends this section with, 'if we live by the Spirit, then walk by the Spirit.' Life this side of the cross is a Spirit empowered life. We seek the work of the Spirit in our lives by the means he has given us – our life in Him and our life in community.

Our lives should be ordered and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We should be wholly submitted to him. All of our decisions and choices should be led by the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord lives inside you. He teaches you how to live. But it's important to take time to listen. Sit in prayer and spend time in the word. Listen for his still, small voice.

Walking by the Spirit makes us more like Christ. Isn't this our goal? We want to become like the One we behold. We cannot become more like Christ through the law, our own morality, or rules that we set up for ourselves. It has to be through the Holy Spirit, always.

Lesson Summary

Faith in Christ offers us what religious rituals and rule-keeping could never achieve. Our eternal salvation is a gift of grace, not something we could ever earn. That is the heart of the Gospel, the main message of Galatians. As Christians await Heaven, how are we to live now? As Paul says in verse 13, Christ has set us “free” – but free for what?

In particular, are we now free to behave as we wish? Does the Gospel of grace give us a license to sin? Should Christians do whatever they want, to whoever we want, whenever we want?! In short, are Christian believers at liberty to “indulge” their sinful nature?

Certainly not, says the apostle Paul in verses 13 and 14. The better option – the correct alternative – is to “serve one another in love”. Christ has saved us so that we can “love our neighbor” and glorify God with our good deeds. Jesus hasn’t saved us so we can indulge ourselves with sin. Rather, every Christian’s ambition should be to live in a way that honors our Savior, expresses our gratitude to God and shows love to our neighbor. Every Christian is called to wage war on their sin – to battle against every temptation.

One of the first rules of war is ‘know your enemy’. Before entering a battle, a good general will want to know who he’s up against – how many infantry do they have, what ammunition, armaments and air power does the enemy have at its disposal?

The principle of ‘knowing your enemy’ also applies to Christian life. Because in our Christian life, one powerful enemy we face is our “*sinful nature*” – and we need to know what its capable of.

Our sinful nature is that part of us that tempts us to sin:

- It’s that distorted, disordered part of ourselves that makes us go after things that aren’t good.
- It is that ‘fallen’ part of our psyche which makes us selfish and self-absorbed.
- It is that proud part of us that is instinctively rebellious against God.

Most seriously, our sinful nature – if indulged – will damage our relationship with God and with other people. That’s why Paul warns the Galatians against “destroying each other” in verse 15. If it is given free rein, our sinful nature will lead us into social strife, spiritual rebellion and sordid behavior.

In verse 19 Paul actually lists the character traits of people whose sinful nature has completely run riot. These include: “*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.*”

Thankfully, most people’s behavior doesn’t get quite that far. Even in non-Christians, their sinful nature is partially restrained by their conscience, and by things like peer pressure and the fear of punishment.

But Christians have a far greater weapon at our disposal. If we are followers of Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit resident in our lives. God's Spirit is personally present within us, and he wants to give us his guidance and his power to fight against our sinful nature. To use theological jargon – Jesus has already justified us, and the Holy Spirit now wants to sanctify us. God's Spirit wants to change our character for good. He wants to make Christians more like Christ. He wants us to give us victory in our daily battles against temptation.

The fruit of the Spirit – are directly opposed to the acts of our sinful nature. For example, love is the opposite of hatred, self-control is the opposite of sexual immorality, and so on. Paul certainly saw this clearly, that's why he writes in verse 17 that "*the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other.*"

Our sinful nature loves to exploit any impure thoughts and images we put into our head. They are ammunition for the enemy. So, in our determination to avoid sin, we should take the advice of the apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 4. Because he writes there: "*whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things*".

So in the conflict for our character we should crucify our sinful nature, we should be determined to give it no ground. We should keep guard, stay alert, and remain constantly ready to resist temptation.