

LIVING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN VICTORY OVER THE SIN NATURE

I. Our Need To Live In Reliance On The Holy Spirit

(Galatians 5:16-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Many passages in the New Testament epistles teach the need for believers in Christ to live righteous lives, but the experience of many believers in Christ is failure to be able to achieve this. Indeed, many are frustrated with themselves because of this failure.
- B. Galatians 5:16-26 deals with the issue, and Galatians 5:16-17 reveals our need to live in reliance on the Holy Spirit in handling the struggle many face. We view the passage for our insight, application, and edification:

II. Our Need To Live In Reliance On The Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16-17.

- A. The context that precedes Galatians 5:16-17 describes abuses that were occurring in the church at Galatia as believers were figuratively "biting and devouring each other" in strife caused by divisions in the body that had been precipitated by false teachers. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 607)
- B. Paul candidly stated the solution to this problem in Galatians 5:16, **commanding** that his readers "keep on walking (figuratively, be conducting yourselves)" (*peripateite*, present active imperative of *peripateo*, "walk; conduct oneself," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 660; Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt. Lex. to the Grk. N. T., 1993, p. 369; Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 856) by the [Holy] Spirit and you will not **by any means (ou me**, a strong adversative; *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) "complete, fulfill" (in outward action) "the desires of the sinful nature," *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T. [Remarkably, and wonderfully so, since the Holy Spirit is Almighty God, one is assured of spiritual victory here regardless of a dysfunctional past!]
- C. Paul's command to keep on conducting oneself by means of the Holy Spirit is achieved by consciously continuing to rely as an act of faith on the indwelling Holy Spirit to function righteously, Galatians 2:20; *Ibid.*
- D. To explain, Paul clarified in Galatians 5:17 that a spiritual war occurred within the believer (as follows):
 1. The "flesh," a figurative reference to the sinful nature that resides in believers who still live in mortal bodies (cf. 1 John 1:8), desires what is contrary to the Holy Spirit Who indwells the believer (Romans 8:9b) and the Holy Spirit desires what is contrary to the believer's sinful nature, Galatians 5:17a.
 2. The cause of this conflict is the innate contrast between the sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, for they "are [for their own benefit or interests] adverse to" (*antikeitai*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; present **middle** indicative of *antikeimai*, "be averse to," *Ibid.*, Mounce, p. 80) one another, Galatians 5:17b.
 3. Consequently, this innate contrast of self-interest between the believer's sinful nature and God the Holy Spirit can "keep a believer from doing what he otherwise would. In other words, the Holy Spirit blocks, when He is allowed to do so, the evil cravings of the flesh," *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T. Likewise, when the believer relies on his sinful nature, he does the opposite of what the Holy Spirit strongly desires.
- E. Accordingly, if a believer intends to live righteously, and if he even dedicates himself to do so, all the discipline he fosters to produce God's righteousness fails to enable him to live righteously if he is not relying on the Holy Spirit. Failure to rely on the Holy Spirit dooms the believer to live by means of his sinful nature so that, to the believer's frustration, he can only do what is unrighteous under the control of his sinful nature!
- F. Conversely, if a believer intends to live righteously, and he relies on the Holy Spirit to do so, he is rewarded by having ample motivation and power provided by Almighty God the Holy Spirit to live righteously simply because the Holy Spirit blocks the function of the believer's sinful nature!

Lesson: Contrary to what we believers may at times think, just because we know that we should do what is right in some realm does not mean that we either want to do what is right or that we are able to do so. Our sinful nature is constantly desiring what it wants to gratify its interests while the Holy Spirit is constantly desiring what He wills to gratify His interests so that we are caught between doing EITHER what our sinful nature desires OR what the Holy Spirit desires – we have no alternative! Thus, spiritual victory over the sinful nature and its evil desires is found ONLY and FULLY through consistently relying on the Holy Spirit as an ONGOING act of FAITH.

Application: (1) May we cease trying to dedicate ourselves to do the will of God by our own means, for (a) our sinful natures neither have the desire nor the power to do what is upright, and (b) there is no alternative route of behavior that is open to us believers than functioning either by the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit. (2) So, may we simply always rely on God the Holy Spirit both to desire and to do what God calls us to desire and do for His consequent blessing and glory. (*Philippians 2:12-13*)