

LIVING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN VICTORY OVER THE SIN NATURE

II. Living Free From Law In Relying On The Spirit

(Galatians 5:18 et al.)

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 Christian experience frustration with themselves because of this failure in their thought and/or behavior.
- B. Galatians 5:16-26 deals with this issue, and Galatians 5:18 reveals our need to live free from law in relying on the Holy Spirit to handle the struggle that many face. We view the passage for our insight:

II. Living Free From Law In Relying On The Spirit, Galatians 5:18 et al.

- A. In Galatians 5:18, the Apostle Paul taught total, unrestrained liberty of thought and behavior exists for the believer who is relying on the Holy Spirit for thought and action (as follows):
 - 1. Having directed his readers who believed in Christ to walk by means of the Holy Spirit (namely, to rely on the Spirit) that they do not gratify the lusts of the sin nature (Galatians 5:16 NIV), Paul claimed that if his readers were thus led by the Spirit in relying upon Him, they were not under law, Galatians 5:18.
 - 2. The word "law" in Galatians 5:18 lacks the definite article "the" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 660), so the word "law" is viewed as to its **quality, not** as to its **identity**. (Dana & Mantey, A Manual Gram. of the Grk. N. T., 1957, p. 149) Paul was not referring to the Mosaic Law here, but to the general principle of law.
 - 3. Consequently, Paul clarified that if a believer in Christ relies by faith on the Holy Spirit to think and to act in righteousness and thus to function totally apart from his sin nature (Galatians 5:16), thus being led by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:18a), he operates free of the principle of law itself. Laws exist to restrain people from performing bad behavior, but under the Holy Spirit's control, one's behavior is upright so that "there is nothing to restrain." (J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, 1974, p. 210, 213)
 - 4. Paul alluded to this idea again when he later described the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, writing that the righteous qualities of thought, behavior, and demeanor that the Holy Spirit produces are of such a wholesome quality that "(a)gainst such things there is no law," Galatians 5:23b NIV. (Ibid., p. 213) Since there is no law against such qualities, there is nothing about them that needs to be restrained, but they can righteously proliferate and abound in complete liberty in the believer's practical experience!
- B. This truth provides encouraging insight into a huge struggle many believers face in their walk (as follows):
 - 1. Many believers today understand that justification is by grace through faith apart from all human meritorious effort (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9) but then they fall for the trap of thinking that sanctification in the Christian life requires one's efforts to try to keep a certain, humanly established set of rules.
 - 2. The Galatian believers had the same problem, so it "was important for the Galatians to know that just as justification is not possible by works so sanctification cannot be achieved by human effort" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 607) even if that effort involved trying to do Biblically commanded deeds!
 - 3. "This of course does not mean that a Christian is totally passive in either case for the response of faith is necessary – faith in Christ to save and in the Holy Spirit to sanctify" in the believer's walk, Ibid.
 - 4. Thus, we believers must avoid the trap of thinking that living by the Holy Spirit is **attained** by doing **even Biblical** deeds like reading the Bible, praying, donating to the Lord's ministries, witnessing and a host of other "rules" one might establish to try to live by the Spirit! Rather, living by the Holy Spirit involves a mere act of faith where the believer launches out into Christian living with a conscious, continual reliance on the Holy Spirit for whatever he attempts to achieve. He then witnesses God the Holy Spirit produce in him the fruit of the Spirit and see God interact with him in blessed ways in his actions. (John 14:21-23)
 - 5. When that fruit of the Holy Spirit appears in the believer's life, he is utterly free to let that fruit abound unrestrained, for against it there is no law code, be it the law code of God or the law codes of men!

Lesson: *When a believer relies on the Holy Spirit, what he thinks and does is utterly righteous and free from the principle of law that intends to restrain bad behavior. As such, the believer under the Holy Spirit's power is free to unleash the fruit of that Spirit in complete liberty and without restraint.*

Application: *May we avoid all directives to think or to practice some set of "rules" or "disciplines" to attain a walk by the Holy Spirit, for all such directives are false spiritualities. Rather, may we simply rely on the Spirit by faith to live free and unrestrained of law, and abound unrestrained in the Spirit's production of righteousness in us.*