

Keeping in step with the Spirit

Four ministers went to the pastor convention and were all sharing one room. The first minister said, "Let's confess our secret sins one to another. I'll start - my secret sin is I just love to gamble. When I go out of town, it's cha-ching cha-ching, let the machines ring."

The second minister said, "My secret sin is that I just hate working. I copy all my sermons from those given by other pastors." The third minister said, "My secret sin is I like dressing up as the opposite sex and go out to night clubs."

The fourth minister said, "My secret sin is gossiping and, oh boy, I just can't wait to get out of this room!"

Have you a secret sin that trips you up? Do you want to tell your next door neighbour? If you do, it will not be a secret sin.

You are free in Christ but do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. (5:13)

Live by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.(5:16)

For Paul, there is a conflict between two natures: the nature of the flesh and the nature of the Spirit.

The flesh of the body, is where your hunger comes from, your aches, pains, lusts, satiation, pleasure, fight or flight, all of those thoughts your mind has, are to keep the flesh protected. So, in that sense the FLESH has an affect on how the mind works. It's a definite ME first drive that it produces.

So, Paul choosing this word to describe the concept that pushes our life choices to the ME first mentality, chose a very good word for the picture of his concept.

That sinful nature takes a control over us, and drives us.

In fact Paul says of it...

***But if I am** doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. (*

[Romans 7:20](#)
,21) (NASB)

Paul has rendered this concept as if it were an entity living inside of us. Nearly like a parasite, but more like a catalyst. This is clearly described by Paul as a separate entity, or an aspect of human nature that is present.

Knowing that LIFE is in the blood, Paul chose a word that was a close parallel, a metaphor, to capture the spiritual idea with a physical image. The blood provides life, the SARX is a life within the man that forces his actions. The flesh drives you to eat, or sex, or get warm, the SARX makes you do what you do not want to do, and not do what you want to do.

It is a force to be reckoned with because the outworking of it in our lives is disastrous. Paul describes it this way

***What human nature** does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; in worship of idols and*

witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious. They separate into

parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have

before: those who do these things will not possess the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:23)

Paul is warning the Galatians and us about this force that is within us that wants to take over. It is like an evil entity that seeks to destroy our lives from within and without.

It is our human nature that wants to express itself in ways that are not wholesome and helpful.

*“**The flesh may** be defined as "man's fallen nature as under the power of sin." It is the evil principle in man's nature, the traitor within who is in league with the attackers without. The flesh provides the tinder on which the devil's temptations can kindle.”*

Reformed addicts know about this power within. They are aware that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. They know that they are only one step away from disaster.

While many of us may not be in that same predicament, giving in to the flesh is still easily done.

So what is the answer? Paul offers a two part solution.

***Those who** belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (5:24)*

The first part is crucifixion of the flesh.

Now Paul did not mean that we needed to go through what Jesus did. Nor do we have to do what medieval priests did viz. **Flagellation**. I.e. beat ourselves up physically or even figuratively.

But we need to know that the power to defeat the power of the flesh does not lie in ourselves but in the power of the cross.

Biblically we nail our flesh to the cross and allow the power of the cross to overcome and defeat the power of the flesh in us.

Practically the code of AA is also our way of dealing with the flesh.

1. *We admit that we are powerless over alcohol (Flesh)- that our lives have become unmanageable.*
2. *We come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.*
3. *Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *Admit to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *Make a list of all persons we have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *Continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it.*
11. *Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

It becomes a daily habit of crucifying our flesh to the cross because we know as Paul knew that it can rise up and take control when we least expect it or when we think it has been defeated!

As we begin to do this, the power of the Holy Spirit, given to us acts upon our flesh and changes the internal

workings and character of our lives where we become a different person; more like Jesus.

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-

control. There is no law against such things as these. (Galatians 5:22,23)

It is the work of the Spirit to transform our lives not our human effort. It is a daily surrender that allows the Spirit to

Produce this fruit more and more in our lives.

In our back yard we have a self-sown tomato bush. All we did was put some rubbish into the ground. It came up and

we staked it and lo and behold it has some fruit. This fruit has grown from a very small tomato to

a round green tomato. For a few weeks they were just green and we were ready to give them up for loss. But the sun shone and now they are turning red and soon we will pick the fruit.

This is a parable of the work of the Spirit in our lives. God buried the Spirit inside us when we believed and were baptised. It slowly grows inside of us to produce fruit. But this fruit takes time to mature and ripen and become what it was intentioned to be.

But we had to nurture that bush and not give up on it just because it did not seem to look like doing anything.

In the same way, each day, we do not give up on the work of the Spirit in our lives just because it appears that nothing is working, nothing is changing.

Rather we have to keep our hands off and let the Spirit produce the fruit and then mature it in our lives.

John R. W. Stott – "The Holy Spirit is presented as our Sanctifier who alone can oppose and subdue our flesh (v. 16-17), enable us to fulfill the law so that we are delivered from it's harsh dominion (v.18) and cause the fruit of righteousness to grow in our lives (v. 22-23). So the enjoyment of Christian liberty depends on the Holy Spirit. True, it is Christ who sets us free. But without the continuing, directing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit our liberty is bound to degenerate into license."

To allow the Spirit to do his work, Paul suggests that we must live by the Spirit. Other translations say Walk in the Spirit or Keep in step with the spirit.

What does this look like?

1. You can't walk in the Spirit and do what you've always done. You can't walk and stay in the same place, at the same time. Listen: if you always do what you've always done, you'll always have what you've always had. And doing what you've always done is what got you into trouble in the 1st place.

1. It's hard to start and hard to keep going. I'll admit, walking is a habit. Like all habits, it's hard to start. And like all good habits, it's just easier not to do them. You see, why do you think it's hard to start exercising? Because your body likes things as is. Well, why do you think it's hard to start walking in the Spirit? Because the enemy likes things as is.

Walking in the Spirit, keeping in touch with God all day long so that you can hear Him when He speaks, is hard work. It doesn't come easy. And once you start, it's still not easy to keep going. But that doesn't make it not worth it.

1. It improves your health. Consistent walking is great exercise, better on the body than jogging or running. Walking is good for you. And so is walking in the Spirit. It's better than doing your own thing. You see, God loves you so much that He wants the best for you. That's why He tells young couples to wait until marriage. That's why He tells us to be careful what we soak in through our eyes. That's why He tells us to avoid things that will hurt us. That's why He tells us to forgive those who hurt us. It's not that He's trying to make life too hard. It's because He loves us so much. It's not a matter of being a spoilsport – it's a matter of helping us stay away from things that hurt.

And as we walk in the Spirit, as we continually do more and more things that please Him, we avoid more and more things that hurt us. Taking advice on a regular basis, walking in the Spirit, is good medicine.

1. Walking means leaving things behind. Obviously, when we walk from one place to another, we come to see some things more clearly, and other things get left behind. We put away childish things, the Apostle Paul said. We have done with selfishness and bullying and

short-sightedness. Those things need to get left behind. We learn that we don't always need to be right or first or recognized. We need to grow up. A Christian who still needs to be appreciated or else he/she won't do it is a Christian who hasn't been walking in the Spirit. A Christian who thinks that only those people with them are right – that Christian hasn't been walking in the Spirit. As we grow up, we need to put childish attitudes behind us.

1. Walking means going up and down. We would all like to have perfectly level surfaces to walk on. But you won't find them. The old train bed is pretty close, but even then, there are slopes. Walking means going up and down hills. Going up and down is part of life. I'd like to think that there are more ups than downs, but to deny downs is foolish, in my opinion. 1 John 2:1 – "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." You don't have to sin, but if you do, there's hope. Walking in the Spirit means confessing sins to God, not denying them. It means that you didn't live up to your theology. Congratulations. You're human. Walking in the Spirit means getting up again. Proverbs 24:16 – "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again."

1. Walking means not knowing what's ahead. Walking means coming to corners. Walking means not being able to see a mile down the road. That's life. And walking in the Spirit is the same. We can't always see the outcome. We can't always see where we're going. Life, as we say, throws us some curves. Listen: if you never do anything until you can see how it all ends up, you'll never budge. If you never give money unless you know you'll be OK, even though God has told you that you should and that you would, where's the faith? If you never try anything new because you're afraid of failing, how is that productive? Does that sound anything remotely like the lives you read about in the Bible?

Someone once wrote: "You're never too old to start getting fit either physically or spiritually. A grandmother wanted to stay in shape so at the age of 60 she started walking five kilometres a day. She's turned 97 and the family still don't know where she is!"

1. Walking means not running ahead but walking with God, keeping in step with the Holy

Spirit, not running ahead nor lagging behind.

So what part of the flesh are you struggling with? Is it an emotion that you can't control? Is it a behaviour or habit that seems to have the best of you?

Name it and Nail it to the cross. Allow the power of Spirit to conquer it then walk in the Spirit.

"Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life in the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as a an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original" (Galatians 5:25 Message Bible)

Walking Free: We continue to pray for our clients. We are seeing God bring healing and transformation to people's lives. Some of our clients have challenges that we are not seeing a breakthrough no matter how we try. Some conditions have roots that are not easily discerned. We need God's insight and power for a breakthrough.

Our team at Toowoomba are now having a few clients, some are very challenging as they come from very dark places. But God is bringing His light into those places.

We are going to Albany, WA, to speak, teach and pray. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit

to bring people along. We look forward to testifying next month to what God did.

We have an opportunity to conduct a seminar to help men and women at Teen Challenge in Adelaide. We may have other opportunities to pray and teach with Teen Challenge.

Praise God for His provision.

- **Thank God for our wonderful sponsors who enable this ministry to continue.**
 - **Pray for our visit to Albany. Pray that God brings those who need healing and teaching.**
 - **We pray for God's direction and provision at Toowoomba. Thank Him for the clients that He is bringing.**
 - **Pray for our clients as they seek God's freedom and healing for their lives.**
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- **Pray for the monthly prayer meeting on the first Thursday of each month and for those who come: Nena, Margaret, Lesley, Diana, Ann, Diana and Julie**
 - **Please pray for people at Toowoomba who have faithfully supported us: Hal and Debbie, Robyn and Jamie, Jenny, Desley, and Craig.**

Hawthorn Church: We have had 12 people attending the Spiritual Gifts study where people discovered their ministry gifts; ministry style and passion. We will be moving back into the church at the beginning of September.

Praise God for the new people coming. Pray for the courage to embrace the new thing that God has for us. Pray for God's help to write the new course.

Family Life has changed with the birth of a son Elijah John to our son David and his wife Maddy. Liz and I have been sick with a virus that affected our throats and eyes. My sickness caused me to miss my grand-daughter's first birthday which was disappointing. It has been very cold and wet and this certainly affects our lives.

Pray for our family that they continue to serve God and His Kingdom purposes.

India: Life continues to be busy for our friends in India. They have had to contend with torrential rains and a growing persecution of Christians in other parts of India that will slowly filter through. Pastor CH and his wife are expecting another child.

- **Pray for Pastor Devadas, Pastor CH and Rev Sambabu and their ministry amongst Hindu people.**

Kenya: Pastor Isaac has held a conference for pastors. Approx 30 attended. I supplied the teaching material for the pastors. Pastor Isaac had to translate it for them. They go back to their congregations with teaching resources .

- **Please pray for Pastor Isaac and his colleagues and their congregations that God will watch over them and grow their churches.**

Thank you again for all our sponsors. We greatly appreciate your sacrifice and generosity to support Liz and I in this ministry.

If you would like to become a sponsor, it is a matter of a one off or regular donation to the following:

Walking Free Renewing Ministries Gift Fund

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