

D. W. March, 1972 H.M.

"WHO CONTROLS MY LIFE"

Gal. 5:13-26

INTRODUCTION:

The question of this hour is, what is a spiritual Christian. Sometimes a non-Christian will give this excuse. I would like to be a Christian, but I do not believe that I can live the Christian life. We would answer of course, he can't. That's the whole point, none of us can. That is the reason we come to God, there is forgiveness, and power. That is the test of the reality of Christ's spirit in our lives. Our likeness to Christ.

The Spirit does not operate on our terms. That is, we do not use his power as we would use a power tool or an electric appliance. We do not control him - he must control us. And bring out of us the best. We are not the potters. And he the clay. He is the potter, and we, the clay.

It is not how much the Holy Spirit, as to an amount I can get. It is how much of me the Holy Spirit can have. We know that when the Spirit is present, there will be a harvest.

Paul seeks to answer the questions for us in Gal. - the first 15 verses of chapter 5 - Paul points out that a Spiritual Christian knows how to use his freedom. So the first test is, my spirituality - how do I use my freedom.

And the test continues and really begins in V. 13. And it continues through V. 26 - when the question simply is put -- what controls my life.

Paul makes very (clear) in these verses, that one of (two) forces will control my life -- either the flesh or the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned about 16 times in Gal. - in this section. And in Chapter 5, we find the flesh and the Spirit are in contrast to one another. The emphasis is on the Holy Spirit of God.

If we went back to Chapter 4, Paul would remind us of Isaac - being born after the Spirit. And he gives a picture of the situation of Abraham, who represents faith. And Sarah who represents grace. And he gives the picture as to how Sarah might also represent the Jerusalem that is above. Now we do not understand all that he says here. As he discusses the law.

V. 13  
But when we begin, with V. 13 - and in this paragraph Paul emphasizes the (ministry) of the Holy Spirit. If I am to be a Christian, or a Spiritual Christian, the Holy Spirit must control my life. If the flesh controls my life, then I am not a Spiritual Christian.

Now I know, that through the years, the (people) have discussed the (problem) of the (two) natures. And some have said, there is no such thing in a child of God. But the old nature has been erased. We do not want to get into that battleground today - but I would think that everyone who listens to me, there is a battle going on. And how are we going to solve that problem.

Now I can give you an (X-Ray picture) and show you what is wrong. But it does not

cure you. It will show the broken bone, but will not bring the answer.

Paul calls the flesh, something that I have in me - this is also referred too as the old nature. Which I was born with - long before I could talk or walk. My parents discovered that I was a sinner. And long before my children could speak, I could discover that they would tell a false hood.

*ill* Now here you are, sound asleep. And the baby begins to cry. And you are sure that there are some kidnappers in the house that have come in the window. And you jump out of bed and run in there. And you turn on the little light. And the baby looks up to you - eyes wide open - and begins to smile. Why, because he really wanted attention. He wanted to be sure that you were there. So even a baby can prove to you that they are flesh. A long time before they can even speak to you.

Paul tells us that the Spirit dwells in us. This only, would I learn of you, receive ye the Spirit by the works of the law. Again Chapter 3:2. Or by the hearing of faith. Of course, we know, nobody receives the Spirit by obeying any law. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God through faith.

Now, as we think about the ministries of the Holy Spirit today, and that we want them manifest in our lives, if I am going to be Spiritual - the Holy Spirit must work in my life.

I must know what the Holy Spirit wants to do. Now the Holy Spirit does not work



through ignorance. We must know what it is that he wants to do. And what he wants us to do. And knowing what he wants to do - we can co-operate with him and we can help him to do it.

As I have said, there are three basic ministries that are listed here in these verses.

I. ENABLES US TO FULFILL GOD'S LAW - V. 13-15

V. 13 "For dear brothers, you have been given freedom. Not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and to serve each other." Ye have been called unto liberty. Only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh. But by love, serve one another.

V. 14 "Now all of the law is fulfilled in one word - and in one statement. It is this - "Thou shalt love Thy neighbor as Thyself." But if you devour one another, you take heed how you consume one another.

Did you know that God expects us to fulfill his law. Now today, you do not obey any ceremonial law. That is, when April comes, we do not go and get a lamb, and kill the lamb. And put the blood on the doorpost of our houses. We do not go to a temple. We do not bring a blood sacrifice.

We do not have the ceremonial law. Nor do we find ourselves involved in the civil law of the Old Testament. But the righteousness of God's law still stands.

Christians can have one of three attitudes towards God's law. I am talking about the moral law of God. Now I can <sup>first</sup> look upon the law as my enemy and fight it. And there are people like that, who do the various things that Paul is speaking against in V. 13. They say, I am free. I am no longer under the law. Therefore, I can live anyway that I please. The law is my enemy, I will fight it. And I am going to do my own thing. Now that way is the way of destruction.

Now there are other people who look at the law at another extreme. And they say, the law is not my <sup>second</sup> enemy - the law is my master. So I am going to bow down to the law and I am going to obey the law. Not that moves us to legalism. And the very people that Paul judged guilty about this - a legalist, is a person who thinks that he can be saved by keeping the law. He thinks that he can be sanctified - he can become Holy. By keeping the law. And usually he becomes a sour, frustrated person. Because it is impossible for his old nature to keep the law.

Someone has said that the new nature needs no law. And the old nature knows no law. So here are the two extremes. (License) - the law is my enemy. The law is my master - (legalism).

<sup>Third</sup> Well if neither of these is correct - what is the correct attitude. It is love - the law is my servant. Did you know that the Holy Spirit of God wants to take the law of God and make that law your servant. Not working against you but working for you. I think that is what Paul is talking about. He says that the Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God and turns it into life in the believer.

<sup>ill</sup> I think this is illustrated in the life of Gideon. If I might use him as an



illustration. He was a man of courage, achievement, and he ended Gideon's great beginning. But he did not have the same ending as he had in the beginning. At any rate, he was an ordinary farmer. From the Midianites. He was in the winepress hiding, beating out some grain, to make some flour, to bake some bread. He was looking around to make sure that no one was watching him.

And an angel showed up. You never know when an angel is going to show up. And the angel said - the Lord is with Thee. "Thou mighty man of valour." When you read that - you almost smile. Because here a mighty man - hiding in the winepress. But you see, that was God's word. And God said, Gideon, you are a mighty man. And Gideon said, you have got the wrong address. You had better check the envelope and probably - there is somebody else. But the angel said, wait a minute. When God says something, it is true.

Then it was, the Holy Spirit came upon Gideon. Do you know what happened. The Holy Spirit turned Gideon into a mighty man of God. What is the Holy Spirit's work. Not just to write the word - that it is finished. Not just to teach the word - that is a great experience. He wants to turn the word into flesh.

And the word became flesh. And that should happen in my life. What I read in the pages of my Bible, should be fulfilled in my life, through the Holy Spirit.

V. 14  
I read in my Bible -- I shall love thy neighbor as thyself. And I say, well Moses, if you had a neighbor like I've got - well, my neighbors are lovely people. but this is an illustration. If you'd have neighbors like I've got - you'd have a hard time living with them. Moses said, hold on. That is in the Word. The Holy

Spirit wrote it in the Word. And the same Holy Spirit who wrote it in the Word, wants to write it in your hearts.

U I think Mary, that Jewish maiden, when the angel feared her. Thou art highly graced by God. And favored. And you are going to conceive and bear a son. The only thing that shall be born of you - shall be called the very Son of God. Mary, no doubt said, how can this be. That would have been unbelief, she said. Well, how shall this be. I do not have a husband. The Holy Spirit will over-shadow you. And the power of the most High will tabernacle upon you. And you shall conceive.

What is it that turns the Word of God into life in us! It's the Holy Spirit. And wherever and whenever I read my Bible - I should not shake my head and say, it was good for Paul. That was fine for Peter and James. I should say, if God wrote it - it is for me! Now the whole Bible is not written to me. But it was written for me. When I read the Word of God, I need to surrender to the Spirit of God, to the Spirit of the Living God. You say, you wrote this book, now you take this word and translate it into a living reality in my life.

The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill the Word of God. That means to me, that I must spend time in meditating, in study, in private. I must turn off the radio, and the stereo. Some people run those things all day. And let the whole Spirit of God write this word upon your heart. 2 Cor. 3 - Paul said, you are living epistles written not with pen or ink. On stone or paper - but written by the Spirit of God upon the heart.



So the first ministry of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to fulfill God's law. And this has been summarized for us. Rom. 8:3 - For what the law could not do. You mean there was something that the law could not do. That it couldn't do something. That is right. What couldn't it do. Make anybody righteous. What the law could not do - in that it was weak through the flesh, now the law is not weak, but our flesh is weak.

When it comes to doing bad things - my flesh is strong. When it comes to doing good things - my flesh is weak. The law is holy, righteous, and good. But I am unholy, unrighteous, and bad. And when I try to change myself, I am on a dead-end street. God sent his own son. That he might come - in the likeness of sinful flesh. And be a sin offering and take my place here.

So the Gospel does not cancel God's moral law - but it shows how people can fulfill it in V. 13, 14, and 15. He says, where we lack Christian love among the Galatians - if you bite one another and tear one another to pieces, lest you destroy your fellowship. The verb used here is a suggestion of having been fighting among themselves (like cats and dogs). Frictions need to cease, Paul said. The fellowship would be at an end. I wonder if present day fusses in churches - are they ever justified. So in what Spirit are they carried on. Do they usually seek the highest good, of their adversaries and of the total Christian body. Or are they seeking mainly to have their own way.

Now a Spirit directed life made it plain here when he was talking about this freedom here.

ill -  
When a person sits down to a piano keyboard, he is free to strike any piano key,



any combination or volume he chooses. He is free to do that if he desires. But if he wants to produce musical harmony - his freedom is somewhat restricted. The principle of music restricts him. If he wants to play a certain composition, the musical score limits him. But these are not limitations at all. If his goal is to play music - rather than to make noise. So love becomes the law. And this is where the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to fulfill God's love. Not as a legalist, or one who has a license, but to practice and love is a very different kind of law from the list of the basic moral laws, of the Old Testament.

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 II. ENABLES TO OVERCOME FLESH - V. 16-21

We come now to the second ministry - given here in Gal. 5. Where the Spirit will enable one to overcome the flesh. We will just take the Word and to see what it says to us. There is something in me that desires wrong things. I would not tell you that except for one thing. You have the same problem as I do.

V, 16  
 V, 17  
 This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the lust of the flesh, lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

So there are some things that are contrary. Rom. 7. You find Paul going into detail on this. Rom. 6 - he answers the question. How can I stop doing bad things? Rom. 7 - he raises the question - how can I ever do good things? He has discovered a principle here. Today, Paul says, I am going to witness for Jesus. He does not do it. If he does, he messes it up. Then Paul says, today, I am going to do -- I am not going to do this evil thing, that bothers me. The more he thought about it,

Woman called her <sup>10-</sup> one unchurched person each week! Told by Visit Women & children last week & her visit little girl this week - like to love 5 people in our church the more he wanted to do it. That is the old nature. side that! You say That's easy! I could do that, but will you? Don't promise Lord that! Woman that lady drives her car, she is over 80 yrs old, she is crippled with arthritis. Had both hips replaced now bad joints, one knee joint replaced - smile of Heaven on her face. I'm doing this in the name of my Lord & His Church -

This old nature of mine is so evil that whenever I am determined not to do a bad thing, it makes it easy to do. Whenever I am determined to do a good thing, I discover the will is present with me, but how to do it is something awfully difficult. The Spirit enables one to overcome The Flesh!

Probably you have tried this out on (New Year's Resolutions). You have started out on a new term. Or perhaps, you have tried it out, and said - you are going to read the Bible everyday. I am going to pray everyday. I am going to remember the missionaries. And I am going to attend church. And then, before the first week is out, you say, I am not going to make it. Do you know why, the old nature cannot sustain this. I've got to do something with my old nature. Because of the conflict going on.

V. 16 Now V. 16 - if I walk in the Spirit, I will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. That means, surrendering to the Spirit of God and allowing the Spirit of God to use the Word of God in my life. So that when I take a step, it is guided by the Word. But if you are led of the Spirit, now that - the tense of that verb "led" means willingly led. And there is the whole problem. God wants my will.

God wants your body - I beseech you therefore, brethren, present your bodies. God wants your mind. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. God wants (my will) - that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. So when I give God my body, my mind, my will. God fills them with the Word of God. And I am willingly led by the Spirit.



But, if you be willingly led by the Spirit - you are not under the law. This is a beautiful thing - there is no law that was ever passed to control the Holy Spirit. He does not need any. Let us suppose you go to a beautiful garden. There are flowers. But for some reason, they are not blooming. Why stand over these flowers. You stand there and you say, I have determination - I am going to pass a law that you shall bloom. And if those flowers could speak, they would say, law does not control life. If you want us to bloom. You fertilize us, you prune us, you water us.

We make mistakes when we pass laws and we think that we are going to solve all of our problems. I cannot say to myself - I am not going to do bad things. Or I am going to do good things. Because the law is really not going to control my old nature. And the new nature does not need it.

Now Paul says the works of the flesh are manifest. The lusts of the flesh are hidden. You do not see the lust of my life - but you do see the works. And the lust leads to works. The trouble with so many of us is - we hide the works. And we do not do anything about the lust. Now the works of the flesh are these. And Paul, rattles them off to us. V. 19. About 18 different works of the flesh, are listed here. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, the sensual sins getting involved in these things.

V. 20 And then he takes up idolatry - V. 19. Now we may have escaped V. 19 - but V. 20 comes and hits us pretty hard. With eminity, carrying grudges, strife, jealousy. Fractions, splitting up the floor you are living on. Hearsies, the New Testament word does not always mean false doctrine. It is a description of a person who says you have got to make a choice. Are you for me - are you for this or for that. Now a heretic is one who goes from person to person, getting votes for his cause, for his program.

✓ 21 ✓ Envyings, murders, and you say I never killed anybody. Jesus said if you hate people in your heart, you have killed them.

And then he mentions intemperance - drunkenness, and other things that go along with it.

Paul does not run out of things that he can list. When you look at the other list that he gives in (I Timothy and 2 Timothy, and Romans) - and you add it up. Along with the list of our Lord given in Mark 7. And you end up with a total of nearly 100 kinds of wickedness and this is not the end. And if you take away the duplications, you end up with about 70 evils - works of the flesh. And that is not the end. Because my old nature is very creative. When it comes to wickedness.

The fruit, as Paul talks about it here, he says - of which I tell you before.

21 B And as I have told you in times past. Those who practice such things, he says, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. I John says to us, whosoever is born of God, does not practice sin. Now of course, David committed adultery. And Moses committed murder. And yet Moses and David are listed in Hebrews 11. And nothing is said about their sin because that is a faith chapter. It is not a works chapter. And they are going to Heaven. Moses was not a perpetual murderer. Nor was David a perpetual adulterer.

Now we have people today who say, yes, I can live in this sin and enjoy the grace of God. You maybe enjoying something - but you are not enjoying the grace of God. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound. Paul says God forbid.



Here is a little secret that I have found. So often legalism leads to license. You find a group of people who are better than anybody else, they are more spiritual than anybody else, their code of conduct in the constitution is more holy, than anybody else. You will find all sorts of things going on behind the scenes. Because legalism often leads to a license. There is frustration because there is a lack of fulfillment.

Where there is not forgiveness and where there is not an atmosphere of love, it is pure law. And when they get away from home, what do they do? And then someone says, we wonder what happened.

The word works suggest the factor. The works of men are always operating in the realm of death. Man's work is always in that direction.

*ill* We can see the whole problem with the appetite. There is the person who goes to the Doctor, and they say well I am having back trouble. And the Doctor says, no, that is not your trouble. And he reaches into his drawer and he pulls out a mimeographed diet. And he says, I think you ought to use this for awhile. Most people probably should use one longer than they do. But when a person has to go on a diet - the secret is appetite. If you learn not to like the things that you should not have. If somehow through your imagination, everytime someone mentions chocolate cake, you get sick. But when they mention other things that you should have - you say, hey, that is great. Well, you've got the problem whipped.

And this is all it is through the Holy Spirit. He fulfills the Word of God through us enables us to overcome the old nature. He is a mortician. He puts things to death.

And he puts things to rest.

✓ III. ENABLES US TO PRODUCE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER - V. 22-26.

The Holy Spirit enables us to produce Christian character. Now we shall not stop with the negative. To be thought that we would be a bunch of Pharisees. And say if I do not lie, if I do not steal, etc. Well, we want to ask the question - what do you do. Now, this is where it is not works that can come from a dead machine. It has to come from my life. And the fruit of the Spirit is something that cannot come apart from my life. Fruit suggest that there is life. The flesh produces death. The Spirit is the Spirit of life. And fruit is of the Spirit. Now if we cultivate this - we get the appropriate soil, the seed planted, then we are going to produce a Christian character.

Now there are lots of people who want instant perfection. They run around to Bible conferences, from one church to another, from one meeting to another, or they buy a bunch of cassettes and are going to find the secret for their Christian character. Listen, (Christian character) is not like a candy machine. Where you put your quarter in, maybe it is 35¢, and out comes a candy bar.

Now some dear people want a formula. They want somebody to say if you will do this, and this, and this, you are guaranteed a Christian character. Well, that is the worst thing I could give you.

All we can say is fruit comes from life. And if the Holy Spirit is within you,



and you have planted the seed of the word of God within your heart and you cultivate this through worship and prayer, that fruit begins to produce itself in your life.

V. 22 Now this fruit grows out of love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. If you look at I Cor. 13 sometime, you will find out that each of these characteristics is mentioned as a fruit of love. Love rejoices not in evil. It rejoices in truth. The fruit of love is joy - love and peace.

Now peace is not the absence of trouble. Many people say, oh, if only my circumstances were different. I would have peace. No, you wouldn't. Worry is an inside job. And a change in geography will never alter some flaw in your character.

McClaren once said, be kind to everyone you meet. For he is fighting a battle. And we might well keep that as a policy. Gentleness, and fruitfulness.

22 And then there is that inner relationship of neatness and self-control. Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. But read some of the things that he did. Moses said he was on the Lord's side. He divided the camp - and he said, kill those people. Meekness is power under control. You cannot have meekness unless you have power. And our Lord Jesus was meek - for he says I am meek and lowly of heart. He went into the temple and he cleansed the temple.

Jesus drew the children to him.

V. 25

If you live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. So this word used in V. 16 - is a word that means to walk according to a standard. According to a pattern. And let us not be desirous of vain glory. All man's glory is vain. Yesterday's heroes are forgotten. And there are lots of people who want statistics, press releases, they want to brag about something. But Paul said what good is all of that. The most important thing is just to produce fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is your life. Don't you ever envy any Christian - God has got to work for you. God has got work for him. And you be faithful to do yours. And he will be faithful to do his. And the Spirit of God produces this fruit.

Spirit enables us to Fulfill God's law with love!  
" " " Overcome the flesh.  
" " " Produce Christian character.

I think we need to remember that fruit is produced to be eaten. Do you know why God wants to make us patient - so that other people can be helped. Do you know why he wants to produce long-suffering in you. So that you might help other people. You know he always encourages me, he always strengthens me. Isn't this wonderful that some individual said about him. He is always helpful. He always brings satisfaction. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He enables us to fulfill the law, he enables us to put to death the old nature, and he enables us to produce fruit. Who controls your life. Make the decision today. It would be wise.

A little Syrian girl saved in Wichita, Kansas - not know much -  
Walked along street singing - To be like Jesus, To be like Jesus,  
all I ask - to be like Jesus,  
All Through life's journey from earth to glory  
and I ask - to be like Him -

she public - main st - woman, tapped on shoulder "What are you singing?"  
sing it again! Tears came to her face as she said "I'd like to be like Jesus."  
could you tell me how? more than anything I'd like to be like him.  
That thought mine - I know John 3:16 for God so loved world I've never  
mean you I that to give his only begotten son that whoever



I had mean you? [Admission in this should not print a  
how interesting life I took for you" -

Women send, all night, can not pray

little girl said all night -

Two got down on their knees on their knees  
Remember + the 16th. all signifying and the women

to saving knowledge & your church.

Should be looking for people like Jesus, who

are controlled by the Holy Spirit -