

Connect360: Walk by the Spirit

December 4, 2023

- *Lesson 11 in the Connect360 unit “A Cry for Freedom: Grace That Is Still Amazing” focuses on Galatians 5:16-26.*

It is important to walk with the Spirit. Many sins are obvious, but sometimes we have to wrestle to figure out our convictions. We seek God, read the Bible, pray and have conversations with other Christians in order to come to appropriate conclusions about what is or isn't permissible in the Christian life.

This process is good for us. It can be taxing, and we might come to different conclusions than Christians we respect. But if we are communing in relationship with the Spirit, we can trust we will not be led astray from God's purposes. Left alone to our devices, we judge sin poorly. But with the Spirit's help, we discern well. The more we walk with God, the more obvious sin becomes.

Paul highlights things like sexual sin and drunkenness as works against the Spirit. But in the same sentence, he mentions jealousy, selfish ambition and multiple words that connote divisiveness in the church.

N.T. Wright says, “We may well wonder whether the Galatians (and indeed many churches today) would have realized that strife, jealousy, and the rest belonged in the same category as immorality and drunkenness.”

Paul might say to us today our gossip and prejudices are just as much “acts of the flesh” as sexual immorality or substance addiction. Our tendency to create division in church based on politics or worship style is as poisonous as debauchery. Our American ideals of building wealth and acquiring prestige lead us away from God like witchcraft.

Our flesh wants to pick out the sins we don't struggle with and identify "those people" as anti-God. But we should fall on our knees in repentance as we see ourselves in the text. What do we struggle with? Where are we working against God's Spirit?

The Greek grammar in his letter implies continued action over time, meaning there is a difference between struggling against sin and living continuously in sin. The Spirit will not allow us to live in constant sin without conviction. It's our role to receive that conviction, recognize the sin we still have, and lean into the Spirit's power to repent and walk in a different direction.

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