

WHAT IS “WALKING IN THE SPIRIT”?

(Selected Scriptures)

Please turn to Galatians 5.

Three time a year I have to fly to Liberty University in Virginia for my one-week Ph.D. intensives. As Ph.D. students, we do research, write papers, and then present our findings to the professor and other students. Unfortunately, there are no non-stop flights between Dallas and Lynchburg, VA., so I must always fly through Charlotte, N.C. Charlotte’s airport has a lot of **moving sidewalks**. I get a kick out of these because, there will always be people who, for unknown reasons, choose not to use the moving sidewalks. Anyway, as I am walking at a normal to brisk pace on the moving sidewalk, there may be a person who is late for their flight and they are next to the moving sidewalk and working up a serious sweat. And there I am, five feet away, moving as fast as the guy who is killing himself to get to his gate on time. Why? My walk is being assisted by something that makes my journey a lot easier.

The book of Galatians speaks of walking, but in a spiritual sense: **“Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”** But what exactly does the Bible say that walking in the Spirit **is**? And how important is this to our lives day by day?

That’s what I would like to speak to you about this morning.

Title: What Does it Mean to “Walk in the Spirit”?

(Prayer)

Pastor and author **Tony Evans** once said:

“You walk where your mind tells you to walk ... if the flesh controls your mind, your feet will follow.”

This idea of “walking” is prominent in Scripture. Essentially, when the Bible speaks of “walking” it is referring to how you and I **live**. We can have a victorious and abundant walk before God, or we can have a defeated and corrupt walk.

Let’s do a little walk through the Bible about this concept of “walking.”

The first place in the NT where Jesus referred to “walking” in a spiritual sense was in **John 8:12**:

John 8:12-----¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not **walk** in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Jesus is heading in a particular direction. Because He is the light of the world, those who **follow** Him [who are heading where He is heading] will not walk in darkness (tripping over things and falling and hurting themselves), but have the light of life (i.e., the light that Jesus gives to His followers through His teaching and example).

In John 11, Jesus said:

John 11:9-10-----“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, [i.e., according to the teachings of Jesus] he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if one walks in the night, [according to the teachings of unbelieving man] he stumbles, because the light [of Christ’s teachings] is not in him.”

What Jesus is saying here is clear. People who listen carefully to what Jesus is saying do not get tripped up and hurt like people who don’t (and this is true for both saved and unsaved people).

When we turn to the book of Acts, the first place in **the book of Acts** we see the idea of walking in a spiritual sense is in Acts 9:

Acts 9:31-----Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

The early church lived before God with respect and godly fear, and allowed the Holy Spirit to encourage them in spite of much persecution. As a result, new churches sprang up everywhere.

Now let’s look at Romans.

The first place we see **the idea of “walking”** in a spiritual sense in Romans is in 6:4:

Romans 6:4-----Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that [in order that] just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Just as Christ’s body was raised from the dead by God’s glorious power, we can be raised from the dead spiritually by the power of God to **walk** (or, live) in newness of life. **Just a few verses later**, Paul will say (in Rom. 8:11):

Romans 8:11-----But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The day a person gets saved, his or her body does not stop craving evil. The body will do so until they see Jesus. BUT!!!! Just as an airplane can overcome the law of gravity, the Holy Spirit can overcome the law of sin and death and give our bodies the power to soar for God. When we fly in a jet, gravity does not go away, the power of the jet engine overcomes it. And the sinful desires of the bodies we live in do not go away, but the Spirit provides the power to overcome them.

The first place Romans speaks of **walking** is in 6:4, but the first place it speaks of **walking in the Spirit** is at the beginning of chapter 8:

Romans 8:1-----¹ *There is* therefore now no condemnation [slavery to sin] to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Vv. 3-4:

He [Jesus, on the cross] condemned sin in the flesh...

ZCH: “Sin in Paul’s flesh no longer has unfettered freedom to rule Paul. On the contrary, it stands under divine sentence and its power over him has been annulled.”

⁴ **that** the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not **walk** according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

ZCH: “What Paul is affirming is that *the thing that couldn’t be done by* living under the law can in fact be achieved by walking in relation to the *Spirit*.”

⁵ **For those who live** according to the flesh **set their minds** on the things of the flesh, but those *who live according to the Spirit*, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but **to be spiritually minded** is life and peace.

Since Paul started Rom 8 in v. 1 with walking “according to the Spirit,” when v. 5 speaks of those who “live according to the Spirit,” we should see these as equivalent. **Thus, in the New Testament**, walking in the Spirit is living according to the Spirit, and those who do this **“set their minds ... on the things of the Spirit”** (8:5).

So “walking in the Spirit” has to do with having the mindset of God.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, Paul said that spiritual believers have “the mind of Christ.”

And that is why Paul said:

Philippians 2:5-----⁵ Let this **mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**...

This is why Paul said:

Romans 12:2-----² And do not be conformed to this world, [= fleshly mindset] but be transformed **by the renewing of your mind** [= spiritual mindset, or, the mindset of the Spirit],

We need a renovation of our minds **INWARDLY** so that we will see a renovation of behavior **OUTWARDLY**:

that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

When you **do** God’s will, you will discover that it is good, acceptable (pleasing), and perfect.

And all of this agrees with and complements what we have been saying throughout **this entire series**:

When we gaze upon the glory of Christ (2 Cor 3:18) in the mirror of God’s Word, we are **changed into the same likeness**, from glory to glory, by **the Spirit of the Lord**.

There it is again, a spiritual mindset!

And this agrees with what we said earlier about being “filled by the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit does the filling as we absorb the content of God’s word:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...” (Col 3:16).

SUPER-IMPORTANT CAVEAT: A fleshly mindset can be **overt evil** (anger, immorality, bitterness, hatred, etc.---the works of the flesh), or it can be **religious** (we call this “legalism”).

The believers in the book of Galatians fell in this trap:

Galatians 3:1, 3-----¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth ... ³ Are you so foolish? Having **begun in the Spirit**, are you now **being made perfect** [mature] **by the flesh**?

The Galatians began to listen to the unbiblical teaching of the Judaizers and believed that they could not please God unless they began to live under the Old Testament laws. And once they started doing that, they lost the spiritual victory they originally had:

Galatians 5:7-8-----⁷ You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you.

So as you can see, a fleshly mindset is not just outwardly **evil deeds**, it is also legalism---trying to be spiritual by keeping religious laws outwardly. For example, the Pharisees were very dedicated to tithing---giving 10% of all their income, but Jesus said they ignored more important matters---justice and mercy and faith.

Bob Wilkin said, “If you want spiritual victory, don’t focus on commandment-keeping, focus on the Commander!”

We want people to be in God’s Word and faithful to the local church. But we don’t want these things for you if you have the wrong mindset:

“I read ten chapters of the Bible every day and I never miss a single service at church or small group, ever. See how spiritual I am!”

That is legalism. That is a fleshly mindset.

Paul told the Colossian Christians that they were becoming like the Pharisees:

Colossians 2:21-----²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle...”

Lots of rules. Lots of commandments to keep. But Paul said 2 vv. later:

Colossians 2:23 (NLT)-----²³ These rules may **seem** wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. **But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.**

And that is because the abundant and victorious Christian life is not based on how much will power you can muster---it's based on listening carefully to and humbly following Christ, the light of the world. You become like those you are closest to!

And if you walk close to the Spirit, allowing Him to fill you with God's Word, you will become like the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-23-----²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Do you have the mind of Christ? Do you have the fruit of the Spirit?

On February 10, 2013, a fire broke out in an engine room **of the Carnival cruise ship, Triumph**. The fire knocked out the ship's power, leaving the vessel drifting in Gulf of Mexico currents. The more than 4,200 passengers and crew were left in limbo. The lost power made it impossible to operate the flush toilets, keep cool in the un-shaded waters of the deep sea, and preserve and cook all the perishable food on board. Passengers reported long lines for food, shortages of fresh water, illnesses, and widespread boredom. Many passengers slept in hallways or outside to escape the odors and heat below decks. CNN dubbed the Triumph "the cruise ship from hell."

The ship finally ported safely in Mobile, Alabama on February 14, 2013 at 9:00 P.M. News crews riding in helicopters followed the ship, and watched passengers beg for help. The ship's loss of power wasn't just a tragedy for the passengers. Carnival expected to lose hundreds of millions of dollars due to this incident.

Apparently, Carnival learned their lesson. In June 2013 Triumph set sail once again, but this time it was outfitted with new emergency power capabilities. Carnival knows that when the power goes out, the party is over.