

January 26, 2020

"Christ has set us free..."

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

"So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict..." Galatians 5:1-17

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Galatians 5:1-25

I have accepted the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ and as the only reasonable response I can make I have **"...crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires..."** Why then do I still struggle with being at peace, being patient, being kind, and especially being self-controlled? Like the Apostle, **"For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."** (Romans 6:15)

First, understand that this struggle that we all experience does not affect our salvation through grace. As those who belong to Jesus we do not live a saved, lost, saved, lost life. Paul tells us, **"...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God..."** (Ephesians 2:8)

The fact that we struggle, and we all do, with **"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control"** does not mean that we are any less saved. If we are surrendered to Jesus, then we are saved and we need be confident of that salvation. But we should still be experiencing the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and we should be growing in his fruit.

So, why do we still struggle? Paul, I think, tells us why our struggle continues in our context for today. He writes, **"Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."**

As we noted last week, our sinful nature and the Spirit are contrary to one another; **"They are in conflict..."** I am convinced that we struggle to be fully transformed because we have not **"crucified the sinful nature..."** Opening our lives up to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit means that we have put to death our sinful nature. Sadly, I think, most of us have not really done that.

We still struggle with our selfish desires. We still selfishly chase our own wants, our own paths, our own way, and we cannot continue to do that and experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Our selfish natures and the Holy Spirit cannot co-exist.

This battle which we all fight is constant because we are seeking to live surrendered lives and for the most part it is a battle won or lost in small choices. The Holy Spirit is trying build patience within me, but I selfishly expect everyone to do what I think they should do and believe what I think they should believe. So, when someone gets in my way on the street or someone expresses a belief opposed to mine on FaceBook my selfish, sinful nature wants me to rage, but the Spirit calls me to choose patience. Which will I choose?

I am, in all circumstances, faced with this choice. I can live by my sinful nature or I can live by the Spirit. I cannot live by both at the same time. So, which do I choose? Do I choose love or hate? Do I choose peace or worry? Do I choose patience or rage? Am I "...*in step with Spirit*" or does my selfish, sinful nature still control me? Is Jesus really my Lord?

