

Friday, Feb 21

²⁵ *Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.*

Here, Paul is essentially asking, 'since all of this is true, why aren't we allowing Jesus to remove ALL our troubles'? That is an excellent question. We have problems in addictions, pains, worries, woes, health problems, political problems, emotional concerns... we have more troubles than we know what to do with! Since we have all these problems, AND we know Jesus CAN fix them... AND we know that Jesus WANTS to fix them... why don't we allow God to transform EVERY part of our lives?

The answer? Because we LIKE our sins. We LIKE our slavery. We ENJOY our addictions, and hatred, and pain. We love the darkness. Jesus knows this about us. Jesus said, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light." {John 3:19} But Jesus also said, "will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed." ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God." {John 3:20-21}

Prayer- Holy Spirit of God, free us from our bondage.

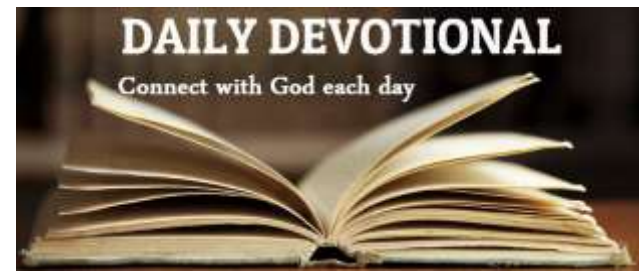


Saturday, Feb 22

²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.*

This ties back again to the earlier point. Instead of using your freedom to serve yourself and your own happiness, work to give your lives to each other, in the same way Christ gave His own life for you. Don't look down on others- or lift yourself up- simply because your life has been redeemed or transformed. Paul knew that once our lives have been changed by Christ - we quickly forget what it was like to live outside of God's blessings. We should never look down on others, regardless of where we end up in our journey. Instead, we need to always remember the love and grace with which God forgave us- so we will then be generous with our love, offering the same Grace to others, as it should be.

Prayer- Holy Spirit of God, free us from our bondage.



Galatians 5 : 13, 16-17, 24-26

New Living Translation (NLT)

¹³ *For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.*

¹⁶ *So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.* ¹⁷ *The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.*

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.* ²⁵ *Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.*



Monday- Feb 17

¹³ **For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters.**

What does it mean, to 'live in freedom'? The theologian Paul Tillich explains that we are ALL slaves to 'non-being'... meaning that we each stand outside the reality of God's True Creation, as a nature of our sin. Without God in our hearts, we exist outside of God in slavery to sin and death. Tillich writes, that by accepting the Truth of Jesus Christ, we can transcend to a state of 'New Being', where we can live in freedom from sin and death. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Christ died for us, so that we could have freedom from this slavery to sin. This is what Paul is writing to the Galatians (and to us) about, when he says we have been called to 'live in freedom'.

Doesn't it make sense that God wants us to be free?

Prayer- Holy Spirit of God, free us from our bondage.

Tuesday- Feb 18

But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

What would you think might happen if you gave complete freedom to a person with compulsive, addictive gambling? Imagine removing the addiction, paying off their debts, helping them through counseling and (essentially) freeing them from their compulsion and addiction. They would be free... but would it be surprising to find them returning to the same troubles, or even inventing new ones?

Christ grants us freedom from our sin, but that doesn't mean that we won't pick it up again. Instead of taking our freedom for granted, we are told to use our new found strength to serve Christ and serve one another.

Why? Because that same person who you might free from compulsive gambling- IF- they are put into a supportive community- will NOT turn back to their slavery to addictive gambling. When we live together as a community of faith, serving one another in Christ, we learn the true value of our lives (and other's lives) through the one who saved us. The problem with sin is that we don't confess our troubles, problems or addictions, and we expect our deepest weaknesses to suddenly be our greatest strength in the face of temptation. That's ridiculous! That's why we fail. Together, with Christ, we cannot fail. With Christ, our greatest weaknesses CAN become powerful strengths!

Prayer- Holy Spirit of God, free us from our bondage.

Wednesday- Feb 19

¹⁶ **So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.**

We possess this dual-nature within us... the Spirit and the animal. We are always craving the impulses of our animalistic selves, which call out to us to satisfy our basic drives and desires, but we also have a higher self, the Holy Spirit within us, that calls us to walk in the way that God would choose for us to go. It isn't a natural thing for us to automatically know what is 'best' for our lives, but Christ has given His life, so that we might have this Spirit, that can direct us and guide us through ALL THINGS.

By choosing to follow the Holy Spirit, we can deny those lesser, animalistic drives that can lead us into temptation. By choosing the Spirit, we can find the Way that leads us to a better and more holy life.

Prayer- Holy Spirit of God, free us from our bondage.

Thursday- Feb 20

²⁴ **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there.**

What an AMAZING image! For those who make the choice to give their lives to Christ, they have the ability to put their sinful nature to death. I have always loved this image, of Jesus who sacrifices His own life, so we can be saved, but those same passions and desires that would bring US down into death, can be placed on the cross to die instead of us. Our Jesus, through His great sacrifice, has created the way for us to 'kill' our temptation and our weaknesses. I have known many people who have found great comfort in the knowledge that our sinful nature and these powerful desires, can be 'nailed' to the cross. Mind you, once there, our troubles can always be gathered up (at our own choice) and we can choose to return to sin, but that is a NEW choice. By choosing to live in a community of love and accountability, our Christ (and those around us) can identify when we are falling back into that temptation, and they can set us straight. It is sad that we can choose to return to slavery so easily, but without our Christ and without a fellowship of believers around us, that is exactly what happens. This is the meaning of 'those who belong to Christ'. I knew a congregant who thought that this meant that Jesus was particular in who He chose to receive, but it's actually the other way around. It is because of our own fickle hearts that we are so 'on again-off again' in the relationship WE CHOOSE with Christ.

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