

## True Spirituality

Gal. 5:24-26

**<sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus  
have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit,  
let us also walk by the Spirit.**

**<sup>26</sup>Let us not become boastful,  
challenging one another,  
envying one another.**

Our lives are very much like a remodeling project.

As a remodeler I see people's homes before and after a project.

The process in-between involves tearing out and then rebuilding.

Most people suffer a nervous breakdown as they go through the it.

It's dirty, demeaning, and sometimes takes longer than expected.

Landscapers will remove trees, rocks, debris and even what was once good things. Then after things have been brought down to a neutral level – ground zero – they add drainage, sprinklers, bring in dirt, add plants; and finally they come to the job's end. All that's left is for the plants to grow into a picture of beauty. From the start they have a plan. The finished product is simply the fulfillment of that original plan.

That's what God is doing with us. He wants to make us like Christ. The finished product God produces in all of our lives is Christlikeness.

What is true spirituality? These verses show three areas:

- I. A Crucified Flesh
- II. A Spirit-filled Life
- III. A Transformed Self

### **I. True Spirituality Crucifies the Flesh.**

A truly spiritual individual is, first of all, someone who has crucified the Flesh.

When we begin we start with a corrupt nature called the flesh. It is described by the deeds of the flesh, which are evil and defiling. They have been described in verses 19-20 of this chapter.

Paul begins this section with the urging for us to crucify the flesh with all its passions and desires (v. 24). They are evil and not a part of God's plan for our lives either here or in eternity.

Several times in Galatians Paul uses this term "Crucify."

**Crucified** – Gal. 2: 20

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal. 5: 24

<sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal. 6:14

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Crucifixion means to execute – to put to death.

The obvious problem with this is that our flesh seems to be alive.

The verb is in the aorist passive:

passive voice (done to us),

and in the aorist which means that it was accomplished in the past.

The meaning is that when Christ was on the cross dying for the sins of the world our old nature was also crucified with Him. Our flesh died with Christ.

Romans 6:6 says,

"...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin."

The phrase 'done away with' literally means, 'to render powerless.'

Though our flesh has been crucified with Christ, we must put it to death. That is what Paul is saying in our Scripture in Gal. 5:24.

<sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Here "**have crucified**" is not in the aorist passive but in the active voice, meaning that we must put our flesh to death on a regular basis.

Tim Keller writes that Paul

“...is talking about an ongoing ‘crucifixion’ which we ourselves do to our sinful nature, as we put to death the old nature within us.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the idea of **radical repentance**.

Paul’s detailed explanation of the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit can be used as a mirror to reflect back what our lives are either displaying or lacking. Then we put it to death any deeds of the flesh by radical obedience:

*“This outburst of anger is not of the Spirit but comes from my flesh, and I turn from it to God. I count on the fact that my flesh was crucified with Christ and I receive the Spirit’s fullness. I ask that instead of anger I receive the fruit of patience, and self-control. Love this person through me, Lord Jesus. Amen.”*

Step one is to crucify the flesh.

Step two is the walk in the Spirit.

## II. True Spirituality is a Spirit-filled Walk

**<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit,  
let us also walk by the Spirit.**

The first part of this verse reminds us that believers have been made alive by the Spirit. The apostle then says that they are to walk by the Spirit.

**Boice writes,**

The Spirit leads; they are to follow. Indeed, they are to get in line with him or keep in step (Gk. - stoichomen). The verb is also used of those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham by believing as he believed obeying the truth of the gospel (Rom. 4:12).<sup>2</sup>

Just as walking in the flesh defiles our character, so walking in the Spirit contributes to our growth in godly character. In a real sense we are replacing evil behavior and attitudes with Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, (North America: The Good Book Company, 2013), p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice & A. Skevington Wood, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 95.

**Related verses** – emphasize the importance of walking in the Spirit.

❖ **Read: Eph. 4:17-24**

Note especially: “<sup>22</sup>...lay aside the old self ... <sup>24</sup>and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

“...do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...” Eph. 5:18

**Don’t be** influenced by anything that will bring out the old nature, the flesh.

**Do be** controlled by the Spirit – lift up your sails to catch the wind (pneuma).

The power of the Spirit in our lives will bring out the best in us in God’s likeness. Christ Himself will live His resurrection life through us and effortlessly produce His fruit in our lives and through us to all others – all to the glory of Christ.

### III. True Spirituality Transforms Relationships.

<sup>26</sup>**Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.**

This verse summarizes walking in the Spirit as it affects relationships.

Spirituality is first-of-all worked out with real people.

**Become** – What we become isn’t simply an act but a series of actions that affect our character – ginomai – an act repeated becomes a habit and a habit repeated affects character. Self exalting is the beginning of corruption, warns the apostle.

**Boastful** – kenodoxoi – Two words become “vain glory” or “empty of honor”

Keller writes,

“...conceit is a deep insecurity, a perceived absence of honor and glory, leading to a need to prove our worth to ourselves and others. This in turn fixates our mind on comparing ourselves with others. When we seem better than someone else in some trait, our “honor-hunger” puffs us up and makes

us feel great. When we seem to be inferior to someone else we are devastated for the same reason. In addition, “honor-hunger” can make us very competitive.”<sup>3</sup>

This conceit has two results: either provoking or envying each other.

**Challenging one another** – prokaleo – competitive

--meaning to challenge someone to a contest.

**Envying one another** – to want something that rightfully belongs to someone else, or to want that person not to have that thing.

John Stott believes that “provoking” is the stance of someone who is sure of his or her superiority, looking down on someone perceived to be weaker. “envying” is the stance of someone who is conscious of inferiority, looking “up” at someone they feel is above them.

This is what Paul is saying,

“Both superiority and inferiority are a form of conceit... Both the superior and the inferior person are self-absorbed... Both the superior and the inferior person are trying to gain worth through competition, at the expense of others. Both want to gain an identity by beating and surpassing others. Both want to be proud and superior.”<sup>4</sup>

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied** Himself... He **humbled** Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death...” (Phil. 2:3-5).

Jesus left the glories of heaven to become a man and die for the sins of men; and then afterwards God exalted Jesus, restoring to Him all His glory (doxa).

“...to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11).

Someone who walks in the Spirit lives to bring glory to Christ in all that he does and says. Someone who is religious and legalistic lives to bring glory to himself.

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<sup>3</sup> Keller, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Comparison, competition, and desire to be the greatest – are all empty-glory.

**Though we know these things it doesn't mean that we do them.**

(The opposite of discipleship)

The apostle Paul knew these things and had the Spirit of God but was given a thorn in the flesh “to keep me from exalting myself!” (2 Cor. 12:7).

**He was made weak so that God's *power could be made perfect* in him.**

**Jesus said to Him,**

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”  
Most gladly, therefore I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”  
(vs. 9-10).

Augustine said, “If a minister of the Gospel is praised, he is in danger; if he is despised, he is also in danger.”

Encourage others for their service and contribution to your life.

Spread the praise around like jam on toast – every bite will taste better.

**Application:**

- 1. Use temptation as a signal to put to death the deeds of the flesh.**

**Self Control:**

Instant obedience to the initial promptings of the Holy Spirit.

- 2. Rely on the Holy Spirit to live.** He is our life, so yield to His control in everything without distraction. Our faith must be lived out in our godly character. Spirit-filled living is Christ living through us.
- 3. Allow struggles and trials to humble us.**

C. S. Lewis pointed out,  
“Humility is not thinking less of yourself: it is thinking of yourself less.”

What is true spirituality?

- I. A Crucified Flesh
- II. A Spirit-filled Life
- III. A Transformed Self

**Key questions:**

- Do I have a tendency to “blow up” or do I tend to “clam up?”
- Do I tend to pick arguments with people or do I completely avoid confrontation?
- When I am criticized, do I get very angry and very judgmental – and simply attack right back? Or do I get very discouraged and very defensive – make lots of excuses, or give right in?
- Are there areas in my life that I have yet to surrender to Christ?