



TIM KELLER
GALATIANS

Spiritual Resurrection

Galatians 5:16-25

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷ 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 with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I

warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

THIS IS GOD'S WORD

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“Paul has been telling us the Law has come to kill us, to show to us how completely useless it is for us to try hard to obey God.

The Law has come to make that real, to show us how absolutely futile it is to try...

Freedom is being out in the open, it is having boldness, nothing to hide.

That is what Paul is talking about. The man who is free is one who does not have any reputation to defend, no image to hide behind, nothing to preserve about himself. He can be himself. That is what freedom is.”

RAY C. STEDMAN

Who Is that Masked Man? – Commentary on 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

I discovered a tradition. We don't have many at Redeemer, and I was looking for one. I found one. Actually, I didn't realize it was until I was thinking about this, and that is every Easter, the morning service focuses on the objective reality of the Resurrection, the objective miracle. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We are going to be raised from the dead.

However, in the evening service, we focus on the subjective aspect of the Resurrection, that the Resurrection is not just an objective miracle in our past and in our future out there, but it's a subjective miracle within. That's why we have testimonies in the evening service every year ... always have. That's the reason why usually the teaching also focuses on that, and that's the tradition.

But I also noticed when I looked at all my Easter evening sermons, some of which are five minutes long, back when we used to have 18 testimonies, another tradition which I'd like to break tonight, and that is, ordinarily I'm very general. I talk about it. We don't talk about how it happens.

What is a spiritual Resurrection?

Now that's the reason why we're continuing with our series on Galatians. Every Sunday, in fact at every sermon, I look out there and I see a variety of people and I also have to kind of look toward one kind of person or another. Sometimes I switch off inside a sermon. *Have you ever noticed that?* Sometimes I'm looking for people who might be newer as this, to whom this whole line of teaching or just looking at the Christian faith is a new thing.



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Then sometimes I look to some of you who've been around for a while and have been at this for a good long time.

Tonight, I'm going to look to the people to some degree who've been with us, who have been through Galatians with us, who've been sticking with it, because tonight I'd like to talk to you about not so much just the fact of spiritual Resurrection, but how it actually happens.

I am convinced that even tonight, though I want to be practical, there's almost no way to do anything more than just sketch the outline of how this happens. But it's all here.

There is no better passage in the Bible to teach you how to change inside deeply, permanently. That's what spiritual Resurrection is. To be a Christian means you have resources for change that are unique, unequalled, unsurpassed.

All I can tell you, Christian friends, is that every line, every word, every phrase from verse 16 to 25 is important if you want to learn how to change deeply. Every line, every phrase, every word is not only important, but there are some amazing surprises in here. Let me just show you a few of them. Some amazing ones.

Again, even though the words *spiritual Resurrection* are not used here, this isn't one of the texts you would usually go to for this, this is what it's about. The Bible talks about spiritual Resurrection.

It talks about the fact that what makes you a Christian is *not* that you turn over a new leaf, you start to live in a different way, you get some inspiration, you get a new philosophy of life. What makes you a Christian is that the Resurrection power of Jesus Christ flows over into you.

So, for example, you have Ephesians 1:18. This is a prayer by Paul. He says, "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead..."

Now think of that. He's praying that the Ephesian Christians would know the power for us, that power God used when he resurrected Jesus from the dead. Now the word *know* could not mean know about. Of course, the Ephesian Christians already know about the power that is so great that Jesus was raised from the dead by that power.

So what does Paul mean when he says, "I am praying you will know this incomparably great power"? Of course, as many of you realize, the word *know* in the Bible usually does not mean cognitive, but it means relationship. It doesn't mean so much know about; it means to experience. Paul is saying, "This power is available to you as a Christian."

Philippians 3:10–11. Paul says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his Resurrection..." *But what is it for?*

In Romans 6, he says, "We died with him that we may live in newness of life." What this is saying is very simple, but actually I would like us all to hang our heads a little bit. This is going to hurt, but it's a good hurt. It feels good.

The Bible is saying when you become a Christian, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead comes into you spiritually internally, and the deadness in you, the fear, the guilt, the struggle, the joylessness, the hopelessness, all the things inside, all the deadness, that spiritual power is now alive in you. Paul is saying, "That's alive in you to create newness of life."

We'll take a look at this in a second. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness. We'll look through all that. That can run rampant through you. You have the power to change. You have a power to change that nobody else has.

When I say this is going to hurt, we have to ask ourselves right away, "*Are we not settling for too little?*" *Aren't you settling for too little? Aren't I settling for too little?*

I mean, *how much have you changed so far? Just how much?* Of course, you have, but look how much further you have to go, and look what you're settling for, and look what you have. The power that



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raised Jesus from the dead, that broke the bands of death, is in you. Okay, that's the point.

How Does Spiritual Resurrection Work?

Now the question is ... *How does it actually work?* Let's spend some time on this. *What do we have?* Let's just see the signs of spiritual deadness, the signs of spiritual life before we actually look at exactly how you move over from death to life.

For example, if you want to see the *signs of spiritual deadness*, here they are. "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious..." By the way, this is just important to notice. "... sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."

Now there are a couple of ways of breaking this down, but I would like to show you there are 15 words here:

- ✦ Seven of them are the sins of irreligious people, by and large, and
- ✦ Eight of them are the sins of religious people, by and large.

When you think of the works of the sinful nature, right away you may think of some of these but not others.

For example, there are three words that have to do with sex. There's *porneia*, sexual immorality. There's impurity, *akatharsia*, which is talking about sexuality. There's debauchery. Those have to do with uncontrolled, out of control sexuality. "Ah yes," you say. "Well, of course, I always knew that that was sin."

Well, all right. Then there are two others. Let me give you two more you think of as sin, probably, and they have to do with substance abuse. If you look on down, they have to do with substance abuse. There are two. You have drunkenness and you have orgies. By the way, drunkenness and orgies, the orgies are not sex orgies. I don't know why they translated it that way, but drunkenness and orgies both have to do with substance abuse.

Out of control with alcohol. Out of control with substances. You say, "Ah yes, I knew all about those."

Well, maybe you did, but then you have selfish ambition, envy, jealousy, hatred, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, and these are things that are now and have always been absolutely rampant if not more rampant in the church. If any of you have been in churches you know they're there. They're all over the place. It's not at all unusual if you were raised in a small town, if you're in a church, those things are going to be in there five to ten times more than outside the church. Sometimes you get out of the church to get away from them.

Paul is not here just picking on immoral people, people who break traditional values. Rather, he's talking about all sorts of spiritual deadness. Then he turns around and says, "Well, what you want in your life is this." Then he gives the famous fruit of the Spirit. Now many, many ministers (and I'm certainly one of them) can (and I will in the future) take a look at the fruit of the Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit

What are these? Let me give you a quick ... *Do some stocktaking, will you?* Now obviously (and I will sometime take this apart) ... But let me just do a little stocktaking.

What is love, joy, and peace?

You might right away say, "Well, I know what that is." Well, love is opening yourself and serving somebody else for the intrinsic value of who they are as opposed to using them to feel good about yourself, manipulating them to get your way.

Love

The opposite of love in the Bible is not hate. It never is. *What is it that perfect love casts out? What's the opposite of love?* Perfect love casts out fear, because the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is self-protection. You cannot love and protect yourself. You can't do it. Whenever you see books about this....



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I think I told you. I saw a book a couple of months ago. The subtitle was *Loving Our Children without Sacrificing Ourselves*.^{*} Can you believe? Never mind. Okay, another sermon.

You can't love anybody without sacrificing yourself. I know there are a lot of smart people who say, "When you get involved in a love relationship, make sure that love relationship does nothing but enhance your goals. It should not get in the way of the things you want. It should not get in the way of your goals. It has to be something that supplements."

Yet the Bible actually says the opposite of love is fear. Since fear is self-protection, love is self-opening. Love is making yourself vulnerable. Love is serving somebody else. Love is putting yourself out.

Joy

Now whereas love is opening yourself to someone for the intrinsic value of who they are, not for what they do for you, joy is delight in God for the intrinsic value of who he is. The counterfeit of love is selfish affection, but you're really using people in order to get a good feeling for yourself. The counterfeit of joy is I guess what you call elation, where you are rejoicing in the blessings, not the Blessor. You may be filled with joy for God just because he's answering your prayers and he's doing what you want, and you're using him.

Joy and love are extremely, extremely alike. Only they have to do with horizontal and vertical. Joy is delight in God for who he is. Of course, if you can delight in God for who he is, if you're really good at that, you are absolutely the most powerful person possible, because circumstances don't matter. What comes and goes doesn't matter. *Do you have that ... love, joy, peace?*

Peace

Peace is just confidence and trust in God's wisdom and control of your life. Peace comes from

not thinking you're smarter than he is about how your life ought to go. A deeply forgiving spirit versus an angry one. Anger is the brokenness. Anger is death. You know. I mean, the doctors will tell you anger *literally* kills you.

Anger literally tears you up on the inside. Anger literally brings you to disintegration. That's the reason why the only possible way.... Of course, that's what's happening physically. Imagine what it's doing spiritually. Therefore, the only possible way to have spiritual life is to be a forgiving person. *Patience* is forgiveness versus angry, irritable. *How are you doing?* Love, joy, peace, patience.

Kindness

Kindness is actually generosity as opposed to envy. Generosity of spirit. Just a delight to see other people doing well, a delight to see other people lifted up. No envy at all. No smallness of spirit at all.

Goodness

Goodness. What is goodness? Now this is actually one that that's not a very good translation. Goodness really means sincerity or integrity. Goodness is integrity and honesty as opposed to hypocrisy.

By the way, did anybody notice verse 22? It doesn't say, "But the fruits of the Spirit." I've had people over the years tell me about the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit. It doesn't say *fruits* of the Spirit. *Is Paul just using bad grammar here?* I mean, you English teachers out here, *would you red pencil this and say, "Ah, there's not agreement here between the subject and the predicate"?*

The fruits of the Spirit? He says the fruit. *Well, why does he give us nine?* Because actually this is one diamond held up, turning it around, and each one of these wonderful, wonderful character qualities actually is just one way of looking into the whole thing. Every one of these is just an aspect of practical holiness. You really can't have one without the other, and yet you can be behind. You

^{*} *When Mothers Work: Loving Our Children Without Sacrificing Our Selves* by Joan K. Peters, Da Capo Lifelong Books (1997)



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can be behind, but ultimately, if you're too far behind in one, they all fall apart.

Integrity

Integrity comes from having enough love and having enough joy, at least, and having enough peace so you are the same with one group of people as another. You're the same in public as private. You're the same on Sunday as you are on Monday. You're the same all by yourself, all alone, when nobody's watching. You are the same in the dark as in the light. You are the same when nobody is looking as when everybody is looking. *Or are you? Have you anything to hide at all?*

I don't mean about your past. I know people who say, "I have something to hide about my past," and usually that's just you don't understand the gospel very well. You're kind of scared. I mean, that might be immaturity. That's not a lack of integrity, I don't think, but do you have something to hide now? Lack of integrity.

Faithfulness

Faithfulness actually is dependability, being absolutely wholehearted as opposed to being a halfhearted person. Reliable. Dependable. Absolutely there. Utterly committed as opposed to somebody who's always setting goals and never reaching them, always making promises and never fulfilling them. These are all signs of brokenness.

Gentleness

Then you have *gentleness*. Gentleness again is a poor translation. That's humility. It's not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. It's a blessed self-forgetfulness. You're just not wondering how you're looking. You're not always looking in the mirror. You're not walking into rooms and looking around and saying, *"What do these people think of me? How am I doing? How do I look? How do I feel?"* It's the blessedness of self-forgetfulness, and that's what gentleness is. Humility as opposed to pride, self-absorption, self-consciousness.

Self-Control

Then lastly, *self-control*. Self-control is the ability to always choose the important thing over the urgent thing. If you're a Christian, these things should be abounding in your life. If they are not, what's your excuse when you have the Resurrection power of Jesus?

Now as I promised you, you say, "Well, *how does that happen? How does that work?*" Okay, it actually is here, and there are some really astonishing things, but all we can do in a sense is lay them out as principles, but you need to get a handle on the principles. You really do. *What are those principles?* All right.

Principles of the Spiritual Life

Let's just, first of all, look at the order. I want you to take a look back here. Verse 16: "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." *Doesn't that strike you a little bit?* Paul does not say, "Live by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." *What's the difference?*

Living by the Spirit

Now we have to be very, very careful here, because I want you to know that there are places where Paul says, "Don't sin." There are places where he says, "Don't gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Don't do the bad things. Don't hate. Don't lie." All the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. "Don't be selfish. Don't be filled with fear. Don't be hateful. Don't be bitter. Don't use people. Don't break your word."

In other words, there are times where of course he says that, but if you look carefully, there is something he says you have to do which will lead to the undermining of the sinful nature. He says, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature," which means there is a spiritual discipline that's deeper than just trying harder. It doesn't mean you shouldn't try. It doesn't mean you shouldn't just say no sometimes, but there's a spiritual discipline that goes deeper. Let's



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go on. Let's talk about that spiritual discipline. So that's the principle. There's a dynamic here.

The Problem of *Epithymia*

The second thing we learn is your main target if you want deep change, the main thing you want to bring all the resources of the gospel to bear on, the main thing.... Some of you have been with me a long time. You're going to say, "Again?" It's not because I'm repetitious, it's because the Bible is repetitious, I want you to know. It's not because I just don't have anything new to say. It's just that it keeps coming up.

What is it? In verse 16, it says, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify ..." *what?* Now in the old Authorized Version, it says the *lusts* of the sinful nature. The same word shows up down in verse 24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and [lusts]."

Well, the trouble is, when you see the word *lust*, everybody who uses the English language, when you see the word *lust*, right away you think of sex. That's the reason why the modern translators don't translate it that way. So they put in *desires*. But that, if anything, is even worse.

What do you mean 'the desires'?

The problem here, in every single pastoral book, everything Paul writes ... he says this in Galatians; he says it in Ephesians; Peter, 1 Peter; John, James ... every single person who writes in the New Testament a pastoral book, a counseling book, a letter to somebody trying to help them grow, every one of them, it comes right down to this. The problem in your life, the thing the sinful nature is producing is *epithymia*. That's the Greek word.

It's translated *desires*. That's too weak. It's translated *lusts*. That's too misleading. It's a word that means an over-desire. *Epithymia* literally means an over-desire, a super-desire, an overwhelming desire. Paul is saying here this is the secret. You have to figure out a way to crucify, you have to bring all the resources to bear on your over-desires.

Now the reason this word is so important, and the reason this is so important for you to understand is the average Christian thinks the big problem is your desire for bad things. "I drink too much. I hit people when I get mad. I shouldn't want to hit people. I shouldn't want to drink too much. I worry. I need to stop worrying."

So these are bad desires, and so what you do is you say, "I'm going to really, really work hard to be a Christian right now."

Paul doesn't say, "Live by the Spirit and do not fulfill the desires of the sinful nature." He says, "There is a dynamic by which we have to destroy the over-desires of the sinful nature."

Your problem is not desires for bad things, but inordinate over desires for good things.

For example, you say, "I have to stop being so afraid." I think I've shared this with you in the past, have I not?

One of the reasons I wasn't able to get along in music.... I was a trumpet player, and I played music, and I probably could've done something in it, but I could not handle auditions. *Have I told you that?* I was trumpet player, and the trouble with the trumpet is there's a spot you have to put the mouthpiece on.... Your embouchure has to be just right. I couldn't even get it on there because I was trembling so much. *So what do I do?* I say, "Well, I need not to be so worried. I need to have faith. I need to have faith. I need to not worry."

No. My music was too important to me. *What's wrong with music?* Music is a good thing. Some of us are going to be out of a job. As far as I know, I don't think they have preachers in heaven, but I know they have musicians. A lot of us are going to be out of a job. I'm sure they'll have a job retraining place to the right of the gates as you come on in. But musicians will not need a new job. There is nothing wrong with music. But my problem was not my bad desire; it was just a real mistake. My problem was my over-desire.

Therefore, this is your trouble. If you look at your life, there are things that are good things you



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feel like you have to have that are overly important to you. They are lusts. Lust for music. Lust for family. Lust for beautiful, wonderful, happy children.

You say, “Wow. I never think of the word *lust* like that.” Well, you’d better start. That’s the word. Lust. But it’s not lust for sex. In fact, even that’s good. There’s nothing wrong with sex; it’s sexual idolatry. It’s making sex an idol. It’s making music an idol. It’s making this too important. That is the focus for change.

Fuel for the Fire

Thirdly, let me give you another principle. This one is a mind blower if you look real closely. What is the fuel for your over-desire? What is the wood that’s creating this fire which is what you have to put out if you want to grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, self-control? I never say that right, after all these years.

What is the fuel for the fire? What is creating these over-desires? What is the root of the thing you’re going to have to make change if you’re really going to grow, if you’re going to have spiritual Resurrection?

Now look carefully, very carefully. Verse 16. *What is living by the Spirit opposed to?* See, this is one of the ways to figure out what it means to live by the Spirit. It says, “Live by the Spirit, which is completely opposed to gratifying the *epithymia* of the sinful nature. Live by the Spirit as opposed to gratifying these over-desires.”

But then look at verse 18. *What there is being led by the Spirit opposed by? What’s the opposite of being led by the Spirit there?* Being under the law.

Now this is one of the most shocking things in this book, because what he says is, “The works of the sinful nature, the sinful nature is something that just creates these incredible lusts, and out of these lusts come all of our sin.”

There’s this long list that comes up in verse 19, and it’s a terrible list, *but do you know what it’s caused by?* In Paul’s mind, to be under the law and to be wrapped up by these over-desires is the same

thing. What causes over-desires is to be under the Law, and it’s being under the Law that creates this incredible list in verse 19. This is astounding.

The Problem with Obeying the Law

Now see, again, I’m looking to those of you who’ve been with me during this series. *What is the Book of Galatians about?* It’s about a group of Gentile Christians, and they have come under the influence of a group of teachers who say, “You have to completely obey the Law of God. You have to go back into every single part of the Mosaic legislation, and you have to take it on, and you have to be incredibly obedient to the Bible in every single possible way.”

What does Paul say that is? Paul is saying, “You want to go back under the law.” *Does under the Law mean you want to obey the law?* To be under the law, *does that mean to be obedient to the Law?* No! Because Paul is constantly saying, “Obey the Law.”

Look, verse 13. “You, my brothers, were called to be free.” He doesn’t want you to be under the Law. “But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command....”

What is he saying? You have to obey the Law.

He’s not saying to get out from under the Law means you get out from under Law *obeying*. No. What he is saying though is to be under the Law is to be Law *relying*.

Hear this. Obeying the Law is not what Paul is talking about; it’s relying on the Law. It’s saying, “By my performance, I can get my salvation. By my achievement, then I will know I am worth something.”

Paul is saying, “That is the source of everything wrong in your life. That is what is opposed to being led by the Spirit. That is what creates the over-desires of the flesh.”

In fact, he’s actually saying that by you trying to become incredibly, incredibly under the law, very moral and saying, “Then God will love me,” that is what actually heightens the over-desires.



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If anybody in this room has ever tried that, if you've been part of a very rigid, very legalistic, super, super biblical community, biblical in the sense of *try to obey the law in order to get God to love you, to favor you*, you know what happens. The harder you try to be absolutely good in every way, the worse your temptations come up.

The more you say, "God loves me because my thoughts are absolutely sexually pure. I do not look at an attractive person of that particular gender. I don't look. I don't look, because I know God will love me if I'm absolutely pure." The more you try that, Paul says this is what happens, in Romans 7. The harder you try in self-righteousness, in self-salvation, in works righteousness to do that, the more your heart will produce those impure thoughts. That's an amazing statement.

Why You Have Over-Desires

Therefore, *what does this mean?* The reason you have the over-desires you have is because you still have in your life the old motivational structure that says it has fixed on certain things. I was a Christian when music was too important to me and performing was too important to me. One time when I was depressed, I went to a counselor, and the counselor said, "Think of one thing that will make you feel great about yourself, so whenever you get depressed, just think of yourself doing something that makes you feel great about yourself."

I always thought of a particular trumpet solo in which I would stand up in the middle of the orchestra and I would play that solo, and the whole orchestra would swell up underneath me, and I'd hit every note just right. I'll tell you why that didn't help at all. Because what he was actually saying was, "Adore that. Make that the center. Make that your meaning. Make that your worth. Really think about that." All that did was when I actually had to stand up, I was more scared than I ever was.

In other words, what it did was, I went under the law. I said, "If I can just be this great trumpet player, then I'll have some worth. Then I'll be able to look

the world in the eye. Then everybody will think I'm great." The more I did that, the more this over-desire hit me and the more inside I was dying.

Crucify?

So what do you do? Two things down in verse 24. There are always two. *What are they?* Crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires and keep in step with the Spirit. To live by the Spirit always has a negative and a positive. I'm just going to tell it to you now, and we'll come back to this.

One of the things that is so fascinating about this passage ... Crucify. *What does crucify mean? Why did Paul use the word crucify? Why didn't he say, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus, electrocute the sinful nature"?* "Well," you say, "they didn't have electricity." All right. I'll think of another. *Why didn't he say, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have speared to death the sinful nature, have decapitated the sinful nature"?* Well, some people have said, "Well, what Paul is really saying is it's a slow death."

I used to say that. I have a couple of sermons from years ago in which I said that's what it means. I doubt it. What Paul is saying here is you have to look at the things in your life that are too important to you ... whether it's music or whether it's your family or whether it's that ideal someone you think you need to marry, whether it's your physical beauty, whether it's your career, whatever it is, the approval of your friends ... you have to look at it, and you have to look at it in light of the Cross.

You have to see Jesus Christ dying for you.

You have to say, "When I have a Savior who will die for me, *why do I need a savior like this?* If Jesus Christ values me so much that he would do this for me, *why in the world do I feel like I have to have this?*" You have to unmask it. You have to demote it. You have to change it. You have to repent of it.

But see, crucify.... *Crucify?* Paul is saying, "Take it to the Cross." But then on the other hand, he says ... You see, this is not, "Just say no." I'm not saying you shouldn't try to refrain. Of course. I mean, there are things in your lives and my life that are so deep-seated, and they're there for a long time, and



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you do have to stop. You have to say, “I know this is bad for me. I’m not going to do it.”

But what Paul is saying is, “There is a deeper process that has to be going on, or in the end you’ll have nothing but willpower, and you’ll give in after awhile.” You won’t be able to refrain. So what does he say? He says, “Crucify that sinful nature.” Crucify those over-desires. Crucify those things, and then it says, “Keep in step with the Spirit.” What does that mean?

Let the Spirit Help You

Well, go back one more time, and there is an amazing statement here. You have to look carefully. In verse 17, “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.” *What’s so amazing about that?* First of all, the word *desire*. We already know what the word *desire* is. The sinful nature, over-desire, super-desire, passionately drives you towards certain things because you’re under the law, because you’re saying, “If I have this, then I’ll feel great. Then I will be saved.”

Okay, but look how carefully Paul does this. He doesn’t quite say it, but he comes extremely close to saying it, so he hits that balance. He says, “It’s not just the sinful nature that has *epithymia*, but the Spirit.” Look it. It says the sinful nature has these incredible passions, these lusts, but the Spirit has lusts too.

Now he won’t quite come and say it because you couldn’t say it. It wouldn’t be right to say the Spirit over-desires anything but look how close he comes. What he is saying is the Spirit lusts too. *But what does the Spirit lust for?* He says that’s what you have to lust for. That’s what you have to let the Spirit help you lust for. That’s the lust that will throw out all other lusts. You have to keep in step with the Spirit. You have to run with the Spirit toward where the Spirit is running.

- ✧ *What does the Spirit lust after?*
- ✧ *What does the Spirit adore?*

- ✧ *What is the Spirit’s job?*
- ✧ *What is he about?*

Jesus says in John, the great Upper Room Discourse in John 14, 15, and 16, “I will go away and I will send the Comforter, and he will tell you about me. He will take of mine, and he will glorify me.”

The Spirit Lusts after Jesus

The Spirit’s job, the Spirit lusts after Jesus. The Spirit says, “Look at him. Look at him! Look at what he has done. Look at where he is.” That’s what it means to keep in step with the Spirit. It doesn’t just mean to try harder. It means to worship. It means to adore.

Why do you think Paul says this amazing thing?

There’s one place where Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 3:7b-9 “... so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, *will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?* If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!”

That’s the gospel. Here’s what he means. We are not like Moses, who had a veil over his face when he came down from Mount Sinai. “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all [gaze] ...” That Greek word really means *to contemplate*.

“And we, who with unveiled faces all [contemplate] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”† Remember how Moses said, “I want to see your glory,” and God says, “No, you can’t. I’ll only show you the outskirts. I’ll put you in a cleft of the rock.” Yet Moses, just by getting that close to God, when he came down, he had so much glory on his face that the Israelites couldn’t look at it. He had to put a veil over.

† 2 Corinthians 3:18



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Looking at Jesus

Paul is saying, “But now, because of the gospel, now that which could not come into Moses’ life, because even the great Moses would’ve been consumed like a moth by a blowtorch if the glory of God had ever been shown to him, the New Testament says when you look at Jesus Christ and when you believe in Jesus Christ, the power of the Spirit comes into your life.”

The very glory that Moses couldn’t have comes into you and you have an insight. The Spirit will give you an insight into God’s glory, into Jesus’ glory. He will show you Jesus’ beauty. He will show you his love with a reality that Moses yearned for, that Moses wanted but couldn’t get. You can fall in love with Jesus. You can lust after Jesus. It’s the only lust that fulfills. It’s the only lust that’s not inordinate.

The Spirit wants to show you the beauty of Christ, and if you see it, to the degree you see it, you’ll be free from your over-desires. That’s what the discipline is. It’s that worship and that crucifixion. It’s specific crucifixion. That’s the reason why. It’s the same old thing, every place.

How’d you become a Christian? Repent and believe. Turn away; turn toward.

How do you grow as a Christian? Crucify the sinful over-desires. Take them to the Cross and then turn and see what the Spirit is looking at, and he will help you see it too. Let’s pray.

Our Father, well, Lord, I got a nosebleed because we were way high up, and we looked down on this huge panorama of all the great things Paul says is possible for us in Christ ... spiritual Resurrection. What is our excuse? I don’t know. I pray, Father, you would enable us to drop our excuses, to take hold of this text and these promises, and to come to you and say, “I want to know the incomparable power that is in us. I want to know Christ and the power of his Resurrection.”

Father, I know you’ll honor a prayer like that. You’ll put feet on it. You’ll help. So I pray that everybody in this room will do it from their heart tonight, or soon. I pray that in Jesus’ name, amen.

Now go and learn what this means.