

-Save This Page as a PDF-

Walk by the Ruach, and Not the Desires of the Flesh

5: 16-21

Walk by the Ruach, and not by the desires of the flesh **DIG: What is the definition of the faithful life of a believer? What were the Judaizers telling the Galatian believers about the Torah? But what was Paul's response? Why didn't Paul pit the Ruach against the Torah? What struggle must new believers be made aware of? How are we now freed from the slavery of sin? Whose responsibility is it to say "No!" to sin? What enables the believer to display the fruit of the Ruach?**

REFLECT: Which one of the deeds of the flesh do you have the most problems with? Is your life characterized by the fruit of the Ruach? How? Why not? Which fruit of the Ruach do you have the most problem displaying? Why? The Ruach ha-Kodesh enables us to fulfill the commandment to love, to overcome the flesh and to bear fruit. Examine yourself. How can you see the fruit of the Ruach growing in your life? Who can you help this week by displaying some of your fruit of the Ruach ha-Kodesh?

Paul argues that the surrender of our own fleshly desires to the personal control of the indwelling Ruach ha-Kodesh is the secret of victory over sin and of living a life in which divine love is the motivating impulse. The Ruach will suppress the activities of our sin nature as we trust Him to do so, and cooperate with Him in the process of being conformed into the image of Messiah as seen in the fruit of the Ruach.

Just as **Yeshua Messiah** is the primary **Person** behind justification, **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** is the primary **Person** behind sanctification. As believers we can no more sanctify ourselves than we could save ourselves in the first place. We cannot live our lives **in Messiah** by our own resources any more than we could have saved ourselves by our own resources. In its most profound yet simple definition, the faithful life of a believer **in Messiah** is a life lived under the direction and by the power of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**.¹³⁷

Paul now introduces a statement intended to counteract the erroneous impression held by **the Galatians**, possibly at the suggestion of **the Judaizers** (**to see link click [Ag - Who Were the Judaizers?](#)**) that without the restraining influence of legalism, **they** would fall back into **sin**. Instead of the impossible task of perfectly obeying all **613 commandments** of **the Torah** in **their** own strength, **Paul** encourages **them** to govern **their** lives by the inward power of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**. **Paul** had already commended that type of life earlier: **For through the Ruach, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness (5:5)**. Thus, the secret of victory over **sin** is found, not in attempted obedience to legalism that has been nullified for justification, but in obedience to a divine **Person, the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, who at the moment of faith, takes up **His** permanent residence in us for the purpose of ministering to our spiritual needs. **ADONAI** doesn't bless us because we are **good**; **He** blesses us because **He is good**.



Paul instructed the **Galatian** believers to **walk by the Ruach, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh (5:16)**. The word **flesh** here refers to our totally deprived **nature**, the power of which is broken when we are saved. Therefore, **the desires of the flesh** refer to the evil desires, impulses and passions that are constantly arising from the evil **nature** as smoke rises from a fire. Our **sin nature** is not done away with. Its power over us is broken, and we need not obey **it**. But **it** is always there, constantly attempting to control us as **it** did before we were saved. **Paul** would later write: **Do not love the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the boasting of life - is not from the Father but from the world (First John 2:15-16)**. Nevertheless, we have a strong assurance that if we depend on **the Ruach** to give us both the desire and the power to do the will of **ADONAI** we will be able to resist **the evil desires of our sin nature**.

When **he** said **walk by the Ruach**, **Paul** was giving the Gentile believers **halachah** instruction, so to speak. **Halacha** are rules governing Jewish life and comes from the Hebrew word **to walk**. **The rabbis used the term to refer to the legal way to walk out the commandments of the Torah**. Using the same semantics, **Paul** alluded to a prophecy

from the prophet **Ezeki'el** about **the far eschatological future** in the Messianic Kingdom: **I will give you a new heart. I will put a new ruach within you. I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Ruach within you. Then I will cause you to walk in My decrees, so you will keep My rulings and do them (Ezeki'el 36:26-27).**

Paul did not pit **the Ruach** against **the Torah**. To **him**, **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** and **the Torah** fit hand and glove. **He** did, however, contrast our human, physical inclination against the leading of **the Ruach**. The “two ruach’s” are in opposition to each other, and cannot be reconciled, it being impossible to serve two masters - one unclean and the other holy - at the same time.¹³⁸ **For the flesh sets its desire against the Ruach, but the Ruach sets its desire against the flesh - for these are in opposition to one another, so that you cannot do what you want (5:17). Paul** would later write about his own experience: **What a wretched man I am! I am of the flesh, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I don't do; but what I hate, that I end up doing (Romans 7:14-16, 24a NIV). Judaism refers to this warfare as the evil inclination struggling with the good inclination.**

We must be aware of this conflict. This is especially true of new believers. They go along in the bliss of being a baby believer in **Messiah**, and then they realize that they have committed some **sinful** act. Unfortunately, there are some who throw the baby out with the bath water and give up going to their local messianic synagogue or church. So, we need to teach baby believers that there is a war going on inside of us. **Paul** is describing the struggle of a believer, not the struggle of an unbeliever. The unbeliever has no choice and only knows how to **sin** up a storm. We must be careful, however, to notice that **Paul** puts upon the believer, the responsibility of refusing to obey **the desires of the flesh** by being led by the power of **the Ruach** and under **His** control.

The will of the believer has been freed from the slavery to sin which it experienced before salvation, and is now free to choose the righteous and refuse the sinful. The Ruach ha-Kodesh has been given to us as **the Agent** to counteract our **sinful nature**. But **He** does that for us when we put ourselves under **His** control, and by an act of our free will, and says in no uncertain terms, “No!” to **sin**. In other words, we must cooperate with **the Ruach** in our sanctification. **The Ruach** is not some outside force that imposes **His** will upon us. **He** is **God**, waiting to be depended upon for **His** ministry, and expecting us to cooperate with **Him** in it. **Therefore, the choice lies with us. The more we say, “No!” to sin, the easier it is to say, “No!” until it becomes a habit. The more we say, “Yes!” to the Ruach, the easier it is to say, “Yes!” until it becomes a habit. Our will**

is completely free from the compelling power of our sin nature. We have been given a new nature, a divine nature.

The Gentile **believers** in **Galatia** had up to the time of **the Judaizer's** entry into **their** church, lived **their** lives dependent upon **the Ruach**, in accordance with the teaching of **Paul**. The power of **the sinful nature** had been broken. But when additions were made to the simple gospel of faith-plus-nothing, they had reverted to the slavery of legalism. **The** Gentile **Galatians** were still trying to live **Godly** lives, but **they** were going about it in the wrong way and were failing.¹³⁹

But if you are led by the Ruach, you are not under the 613 commandments of the Torah (5:18). The Torah is not only *no* safeguard against **the flesh**, but rather provokes it to more **sin**! As a result, the believer who would refuse being **led by the flesh** must refuse being **led by the Torah** also. Being **led by the flesh** and **the Torah** are closely aligned, whereas **the flesh** and **the Ruach** are utterly opposed to each other. This is the freedom from legalism to which **Paul** refers in **Romans 8:1-4**.

Now the deeds of the flesh are clear, this is not an exhaustive list, but it contains some of **the basic categories**:

Sensual: sexual immorality (Greek: *porneia*, where we get the English word *pornography*), **impurity** (Greek: *akatharsia*, meaning *unclean*), and **indecenty** (Greek: *aselgeia*, which originally referred to any excess or lack of restraint but came to be associated primarily with *sexual excess*. It refers to uninhibited sexual indulgence *without shame and without concern for what others think or how they might be affected or infected*) **(5:19)**. These remind us of a lot of what is written about in **the Torah**. These prohibitions point to **Leviticus 18** and **20**, and a lot of **Deuteronomy** - **the Torah's** prohibitions against adultery, sex outside of marriage, prostitution, homosexuality and promiscuity. That these prohibitions also apply to Gentiles was, in **Paul's** opinion, self-evident.

False worship: idolatry and **sorcery** (Greek: *pharmakeia*, from where we get *pharmacy* and *pharmaceutical*). Many ancient religious ceremonies involved occultic practices in which drugs were used to induce supposed communication with different gods, and *pharmakeia* thereby came to be closely associated with witchcraft and black magic. A generous amount of **the Torah's** 365 prohibitions are concerned with **idolatry**. With that one word, **Paul** reminds us of many passages and commandments. In his opinion, it should be self-evident that those prohibitions apply equally to both Jewish and Gentile believers. **The deeds of the flesh** not only defile us but also our relationship to **God**.

Relationships: Human relationships were also defiled by certain **hostilities** which result in **strife**. This refers to hateful attitudes, which result in **hostility** towards others, often with little or no provocation or justification. It is the all-too-common **sin** of unbridled temper. Although **jealousy** does not necessarily result in **outbursts of anger** in the way that hostilities result in strife, the first **sin** in each case refers to wrong attitudes and the second to wrong actions. **Selfish ambition, dissension, factions (5:20)**, and **envy** applied equally to Jews and Gentiles. They are more specific and ongoing expressions of the general **sins** that are seen on this list. They represent animosities between people and groups that sometimes continue to fester and grow, long after the original cause of the conflict has passed. Once established, this can become an extremely destructive way of life.

Temperance: Drunkenness, carousing probably had special reference to the orgies that so often characterized the pagan worship ceremonies that many of the Gentile converts of Galatia had participated in. In a more general and universal sense, however, they refer to becoming drunk under any circumstance and to all rowdy, boisterous, and crude behavior.

As already observed, **and things like these** indicates that **Paul's** list of **deeds of the flesh** is only representative and not exhaustive. Nor were **these sins** ones that the **Galatians** believers had only recently been tempted by or fallen into. **I am warning you, Paul** said: **just as I warned you before. These** appear to have been **sins** which were dominant in the culture and by which the **Galatians** still being tempted.

The high point of **the apostle's** forewarning is sobering: **Those who practice** (Greek: *prasso*, meaning *continual, ongoing action*) **such things will not inherit God's Kingdom (5:21)**. Because the list of sins is so extensive and the warning so severe, this passage has caused many believers to doubt their salvation. What believer can claim never to have committed one of **these sins**? But the key is the word **practice**. Scripture always assesses our character on the basis of our common, habitual actions, not our occasional ones. People who habitually practice sin show themselves to be **the enemies of God (James 4:4)**. The lost occasionally does humanly good things, and believers occasionally fall into sin. But the basic character of the lost is to practice evil **deeds of the flesh** and that of the believer to bear **the fruit of the Ruach (First John 3:4-10)**.¹⁴⁰

But it is important for believers to know that this battle against **the flesh** is a winnable war because **greater is He (the Ruach ha-Kodesh) who is in you than he (Satan) who is in the world (First John 4:4b)**. So day-by-day, hour-by-hour, moment-by-moment, you can win this war. **Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body so that you obey its desires. And do not keep yielding your body parts to sin as tools of wickedness; but**

yield yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your body parts as tools of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under [legalism] but under grace (Romans 6:12-14).

As we live our lives, we make decisions that affect us. Sometimes it's little things. But sometimes there are BIG things. We live in a culture and a **world** that wants to drag us down into a black hole of despair. That's why the Bible says **be in the world . . . but not of the world (John 17:13-16)**. Have you noticed how people talk today? What people write today? And you have to make a decision . . . am I going to think about that. The Bible says we have a choice, that we are to **take every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah (Second Corinthians 10:5)**. You see something provocative. You can't unsee what you've seen, but the second look is a choice. These things will take root if we allow them to do that. What are you allowing to come into your heart, mind and soul? Who is watching you do it? There is a battle going on between evil and righteousness, between **the flesh** and **the spirit**.

How can we win the battle? **Paul** tells us that **the One working in you is God - both to will and to act for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13)**. Do you see those two words **will** and **act**? Will means what you think and **act** means what you do. Many times we have been doing wrong because we have been thinking wrong. We have been feeding **the flesh** and the things of this **world**. But **God is working in you. The Ruach ha-Kodesh** has come to live inside of you. The one you feed the most wins. It's that simple. And when you give **Him** the control of your thoughts, of your heart, when you feed **the spirit** rather than **the flesh, the spirit** wins. You are the only person who can make that decision for you.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, We so love **You**, praise you and worship you! It is such a joy and delight to know that when we battle against the flesh - it is a battle that we can definitely win - as we look to **You** and rely on **Your** strength. **No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful - He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape, so you will be able to endure it (First Corinthians 10:13).***

*Praise **You** that as glorious as Heaven will be, somehow **You** reward us when we choose to serve out of a heart full of love for **You**. **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid—which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work - what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the***



foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14). What a joy to worship and serve **You!** We look forward not to the accumulation of rewards, to giving the honor of receiving them back to **You**, similar to how **the twenty-four elders** in Heaven give you **their** crowns: **The twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. And they throw their crowns down before the throne, chanting, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, (Revelation 4:10-11a).**

You are the best **Father** that ever could be and we love **You** so much! We rejoice in winning temptation battles and producing fruit for **You**. In **Your Holy Son's** name and power of resurrection! Amen