

Walking in the Spirit

We are told that “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”; and also, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”^[1] The Spirit is God’s presence within us.^[2] If we want to have strength in our lives for overcoming the draw that sin has over us, we need to get a better understanding of walking in the Spirit because sin and virtue are not habits that we can change from one to the other, at will, without God. Sin is a lack of God’s power. Virtue is Holy Spirit empowerment. Our usual religious practices do not bring us to this place of power because, if they did, there would be more victory over sin than we usually see and experience. I noticed this in my own religious upbringing. Later on, when I was learning of inner peace because of my own personal needs, I went to the Bible, and it taught me of everyone’s need for inner peace, and how we get it from God.

We are all born with human weakness. In the Bible, it is called the law of sin.^[3] It is a state of being that is prior to any of our acts of sin. Paul describes it as not doing the good that we wish to do, and doing the things that we hate to do. We can all wish for what is good; but, we don’t have the strength to accomplish it. This is true of all human beings who are alive today. Without Christ, it isn’t possible to be strengthened from the law of sin.^[4] Christ came on earth to give us strength, and not just to absolve us from past sins.^[5] He did not come to forgive sin without strengthening us from repeating the same sins over and over again.

Forgiveness of sin includes an infusion of God’s strength. They are not separate events: “righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”^[6] Christ is the one who infuses this strength into us when His Spirit is within us; then, we can

live and walk in the Spirit. This is why He tells us to come to Him for rest from our burdens.^[7] There is no peace for the wicked even when they get what they want because it will never be enough for them.^[8] When we unconditionally rest our minds on Christ, He gives us His enhanced rest which is the peace that passes all understanding and His strength. There is no fruit of the Spirit for us without Him; and no living and walking in the Spirit.^[9]

The things of the world can never bring us strength from God. They can only offer us things that make us temporarily feel good, which include ineffective religious practices; but God is very specific in the way that He wants us to approach Him for peace and strength. We need to reject our own willpower efforts because they are not the openness toward God that we need in order to receive strength from Him. They will hinder rather than help because they imply that we can have strength apart from Him. Many other religions tell us to go inward to find a god that has always been there; therefore, their adherents remain only within their own strength, without drawing strength from the Biblical God by going outward in unconditional trust towards Him. Using Biblical imagery in these practices does not change them.

God wants us to be anxious for nothing by casting all of our care on Him.^[10] This is how we prepare a void for Him to fill. It is essentially an extreme passivity or receptivity toward God that draws His Spirit into us that contains His peace and strength. This degree of passivity toward God can only exist when our minds go outward in total unconditional trust toward Him. The thrust of the mind is outward rather than inward. This is basic for receiving God's strength for overcoming any human weakness that we may have, without exception. Without this element, all of our piety practices and sacraments will be a form of godliness without God's power.^[11] Even when we trust in God's word we also need to trust in the Giver of the

word; otherwise, it will fall short. When we have God's power, spiritual practices that we have used as replacements will either fall by the wayside or will be used properly.

"Thus says the LORD, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls."^[12]

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^[1] Galatians 5:25, 16

^[2] Cf. 2Corinthians 3:17-18

^[3] Cf. Matthew 26:41; Romans 7:14 thru 8:2

^[4] Cf. Romans 8:2

^[5] Cf. Romans 5:6

^[6] Psalms 85:10

^[7] Cf. Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 30:15; 48:22; ; John 14:27

^[8] Cf. Isaiah 57:20-21

^[9] Cf. Galatians 5:16-25

^[10] Cf. 1Peter 5:5-7; Philippians 4:6-7; James 4:5-10; Proverbs

3:5-6; Matthew 6:25-34; 11:28-30; Psalms 37:7; 55:22; Isaiah 26:3-4; 30:15; 55:7-9; John 6:63; Romans 13:14; 6:13; 8:28; Galatians 5:16-25

^[11] Cf. 2Timothy 3:5

^[12] Jeremiah 6:16