

## To Be Holy = Surrender All

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We just got done celebrating the Fourth of July in which we celebrate America. As Americans, we celebrate many blessings – our freedoms, Capitalism, and many other things. One of the things we celebrate is our personal freedom that we enjoy. We can grow up and go to any higher school of learning and go into almost any type of employment in America. The sky is the limit. In fact, we have so much freedom to make our own choices; many say we are our own leaders for our own destiny. Most Americans have a high opinion of themselves. Maybe one of the reasons for this is because of “individualism”. This is a political and social philosophy that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual (Encyclopedia Britannica). We use this term regularly today to describe the view we have for ourselves. It’s all about me and myself. The problem is the term “individualism” is not that easy to explain. This term became a common use term during the French Revolution in a negative way as a way to label those who did not have interest of the people as a whole. Socialism used this term to describe those who go against their thought of group control. Germany used this term to define those with great minds and celebrated individual greatness before and during WWII. America started to embrace this term during the 1800’s through Puritanism and Jeffersonianism which was big on the natural rights of the people. Individualism has been around for many centuries and has been stretched and reshaped to fit different time periods. Our individualism was greatly under attack during the COVID years when individualism was greatly boxed in by state and federal government. This caused a lot of pain for man because we view our individualism as a right and we think no one has a right to attack our individualism. I have the right to do whatever I want. Plus, many think they know what is best for themselves. This individualism philosophy has seeped into the American Church as well. We want to do church our own way. So, many either don’t go to church because they don’t want their individualism attacked or they don’t want to follow a group of people who follow the same Word of God. Also, many who do love Jesus at the same time try to live a life of individualism. They only find that they have become a miserable and a non-compassionate person. Now, Individualism

has many different shapes depending where you're at in this world as different cultures have different views of individualism. In America, we hold a high view of ourselves and our rights to make choices on our own. We know best on what is best for us. Plus, we know Jesus and He has forgiven our sins and we're good to go – right? We've been talking for the past few weeks about Holy Living in the world we live in and the question we have to ask is does individualism and Holy Living mix? Let's find out.

Let's turn to Galatians 5: 13-26 where we read this, <sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. <sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy,<sup>[a]</sup> drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do<sup>[b]</sup> such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And 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 keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (ESV - Biblegateway.com)"

Paul starts off by reminding the Galatians' Church that they now could live in freedom and he does say that they were called to be free in verse 13. That sounds nice, doesn't it? Many think that once one has a relationship with Jesus, those past sins are forgiven and they can now live a new life in sin and not have to worry about it. This is not the case. Paul is reminding them that they are now free from their past sin, but they are not to live in the flesh. When Scripture uses



the term “flesh”, it means this dying body of ours and the sinful nature that controls us before we are made anew through Jesus Christ. Paul is telling us we are not to go back to our old way of life that was controlled by our sinful nature. We are free from that because of the blood of Jesus. Instead, we are to love people because Paul quotes from Jesus that we are to love people as ourselves in verse 14. So, Paul tells the Church to “walk” in or by the Spirit depending your translation. The Greek term used in verse 16 means to live; conduct one’s life (Strong’s Concordance). We are to live and conduct our life by the leading of the Holy Spirit. We see Paul states in verse 25 that we are to “walk in the Spirit” depending your translation. The Greek term for “walk” is a different Greek term which means to follow (Strong’s Concordance). If we put all this together, Paul is telling us that we are to conduct our life by walking in step with the Holy Spirit. It also means we follow in step by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us. When we do this, His Spirit will control our human nature and we will not want to sin. We will not want to follow the desires of the flesh which is completely the opposite of the fruits of the Spirit and Paul gives examples. In fact, Paul goes as far as saying that we are to keep in step with the Spirit. We just don’t walk behind; we keep in step. When we keep in step with His Spirit, we will produce love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All of these character traits come from loving the Lord with everything we have which then this love flows down to the people around us. These character traits go against the examples Paul gives in verses 19, 20, and 21. The list is long and this is what the sinful nature produces. So, when you hear people talk about love, do they walk in step with their sinful nature? If so, they do not have the love of Jesus in them; they have the love of the world in them and that’s not the same as the love of Jesus because human love only goes so far. The other week, I gave an example of how Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, a Lutheran Pastor, showed love toward someone who had given his name to the Communist Government in Romania and because of that Wurmbrand was in prison for many years. Wurmbrand wanted that informant to know about Jesus. Well, I just read another story this past week about another person who was walking with Wurmbrand down a street and a person came up to him and Wurmbrand hugged the person. It was one of the

guards in that prison who had tortured him. You see, Wurmbrand led that guard to Jesus during his stay there and that guard started to help the prisoners until he was caught and put in prison as well. Wurmbrand was only living out what Paul is telling us to live out and Paul is only preaching Jesus. This is all part of Holy Living. There's more.

In verse 24, Paul tells us, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (NIV)" For us to walk in step with the Spirit of God, we need our flesh with its desires and passions nailed to the cross and covered by His blood. When this happens, we become "sanctified". What do I mean by this? Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-7 where we read this, "<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification:<sup>[a]</sup> that you abstain from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each one of you know how to control his own body<sup>[b]</sup> in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)"

So, walking in step with God's Spirit means that we must go through Jesus for our sins to be forgiven. Then, we are made right with God and we can start walking in Holy Living with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses an important term in verse 3 - sanctification or sanctified. When we give our life over to Jesus, He sanctifies us through His blood. To be sanctified means to be now set apart for God with moral cleanness. This is the will of God for us as Paul states in verse 3. God wants this so that we can live out His will for us that is stated in verse 7, "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." God wants us to enjoy His presence just like Adam and Eve did before their fall into sin. They could look at their hands and arms and see no decay like we can today. They were living a pure and holy life in pure form. We can enjoy a part of that today spiritually if we allow ourselves to become sanctified through Jesus where we can start to have this growing relationship with Jesus where our love for Him grows stronger and stronger every day. This is the will of God for us, not for us to try to please our culture in every turn. All we're doing then is trying to please our human nature.



When we do this, it means we no longer want to follow in the steps of the Holy Spirit. Well, you may say that being sanctified is good enough. Paul states otherwise.

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 5: 23-24 where we read this, "<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)" Paul is talking to the Church here. This Church was filled with sanctified people – people who were set apart for God with moral cleanness through Jesus. Now, Paul tells them to let God sanctify them completely or through and through. In Wesley Theology, we call this entire sanctification. Paul is telling the Church to allow God to set them apart for God through and through. This means God's will for us is to surrender all for total healing of the mind and heart. This means we ask the Spirit to check us to see if there is anything we are holding from God and this can be anything including sin. Plus, we now get this deep hunger and thirst for Jesus we never had before. We want to be blameless before the Lord because now we want to love Him with everything we have. Just like a spouse shouldn't hold back secrets from their own spouse, we no longer want to hold anything back to the Lord. I've been saying that our retirements should be surrendered to the Lord. I was talking last week to a friend who will retire next year and I kept saying "my" retirement and I'm having a hard time surrendering my retirement to God. You see, when the Lord called me into the ministry, at the same time, the Spirit led me to tell the Lord I surrendered my all. I discovered just being sanctified when I first allowed Jesus into my heart wasn't enough. It was the will of God that I would have a yet better relationship with Him. In other words, its like going up the steps of a ladder to a better relationship with the Lord. We can't be living life following our own desires and wants. When we tell Jesus we surrender all, verse 24 gives us a promise, "The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it". He will sanctify you through and through. Do you want to be sanctified through and through? Do you want the Spirit to help you to surrender all to the Lord? Ask and He will help to do that. It is only a prayer away.

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001