

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

(SB_Galatians_Lsn13_Chapter 6)

Context for Chapter 6

After having presented the two opposing sets of desires in the believer’s life (i.e. the “flesh” and the Holy Spirit) in chapter 5, Paul made the statement in 5:25-26 that believers are those who have been made alive (i.e. regenerated) by the Holy Spirit; therefore, they should “walk in the Spirit.”

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. **26** Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.¹

There are some interesting things that we need to highlight and observe regarding the Greek construction of these two verses as well as Paul’s pneumatology. Paul uses a 1st class condition of the word “if” in verse 25, thus he is highlighting a fact or a fulfilled condition. We could translate this “in view of the fact.” The Galatians had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit; therefore, they had new life that had been supplied by the Holy Spirit.

Next, Paul chose to use the present, active, subjunctive of the Greek word *stoicheo* translated “walk.” There are some important things we need to observe and note regarding this word.

- ✓ Paul could have chosen to use the Greek word *peripateo* which is used to signify the whole realm of activities in life – whether believer or unbeliever.²
- ✓ Literally translated, *peripateo* means to *walk around*, thus a reference to our general day-to-day activities along which we trod – believer or unbeliever, depending upon context.
- ✓ Paul needed to emphasize a different sense – a walk that is aligned with a divine purpose.
- ✓ There are occasions when *peripateo* is used in an exhortation to demonstrate Christian character in one’s day-to-day activities (cf. Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 2 Cor 5:7; Eph 2:10; 5:2); however, by itself, *peripateo* doesn’t carry a meaning of alignment, yieldedness, or walking in obedience.
- ✓ However, *stoicheo* is a Greek word that means to walk in step and carries the sense of being in agreement.³
- ✓ Outside of Scripture, *stoicheo* was used to be in rank, thus, when used of believers, it conveyed the idea that believers were to walk in alignment with the Holy Spirit’s direction or to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading.
- ✓ Vine’s Expository Dictionary states that *stoicheo* is used in Galatians 5:25 “of walking ‘by the Spirit,’ ... in an exhortation to keep step with one another in submission of heart to the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

² W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* [electronic edition by Logos Research Systems, 1996] (Old Tappan NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1981).

³ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [computer file] / edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich; translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley.—electronic ed.—Grand Rapids : William B. Eerdmans, c1985; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996.

Holy Spirit, and therefore of keeping step with Christ, the great means of unity and harmony in a church.”⁴

- ✓ Therefore, Paul is simultaneously presenting an exhortation and vision to the individual believer as well as envisioning God’s desire for the corporate body of believers of the church of Galatia.
- ✓ By using the subjunctive mood as Paul did here, Paul is highlighting the fact that this was a potential dependent upon the volitional choice of his readers.

Thus, the exhortation is to the Galatians who have divine life resident in their beings, to conduct themselves under the guidance, impulses, and energy of that life. Here we have ***the free will of the Christian and his responsibility*** to live the highest type of Christian life, and the grace of God which will make that possible. The responsibility of the saint is to desire to live a Christ like life, ***to depend upon the Holy Spirit for the power to live that life***, and ***to step out on faith*** and live that life. This fulfilled, will bring all the infinite resources of grace to the aid of the saint, and put in operation all the activities of the Spirit in his behalf. Translation. *In view of the fact that we are being sustained in (spiritual) life by the Spirit, by means of the Spirit let us go on ordering our conduct.*⁵ [Bold, italics, and underlined phrases are mine]

Use of Stoicheo in Chapter 6

Paul uses *stoicheo* again in 6:16 to teach a principle relating to those who walk according to the rule stated in verses 14-15.

14 But may it never be that I should boast [*in contrast to those who proudly display their adherence to the Law like the Judaizers or any other human power system*], except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 16 And those who will walk [*future, active, indicative of stoicheo*] by **this rule** [*the freedom that is ours in Christ from the bondage of systems of this world*], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God [*believing Jews who followed Abraham’s pattern of faith*]. (Galatians 6:14-16)

- ✓ By using the Greek word *stoicheo*, Paul is highlighted the fact that believers need to be yielded to (i.e. follow) the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Yieldedness is absolutely essential if the believer is to reside within the insulating power of the divine power sphere.
- ✓ In 6:16, Paul highlights the benefits that accrue to the believer who lives according to the principles of grace, faith and love that he has taught in this letter.
- ✓ The benefits – “peace” and “mercy” (results in sharing the happiness, contentment of God).

Connection to The Divine Power Sphere

By now in our study of this wonderful letter, you should readily see the connection between the conceptual framework for understanding the believer’s spiritual life that I’ve called “*The Divine Power Sphere*” and Paul’s teaching. Kenneth Wuest captures the relationship

⁴ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, [electronic edition].

⁵ Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Volume 1, “Galatians” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944, 1972), 162.

between the believer's volitional capacity and the power of the Holy Spirit working in the believer's life in the quote provided. For purposes of personal meditation, I include the diagram of the conceptual framework we've examined in another series.

In verse 25, we see how the conceptual framework diagramed below, relates to Paul's references to principles of the spiritual life of the believer. Paul certainly understood the believer's responsibility while knowing that divine power was essential to a consistency (momentum) of the spiritual life.

The walk in the Spirit (*stoicheo*) will align with the Holy Spirit's direction and leadership. If the believer does not opt to yield and walk in the Spirit, then the believer will default to the power or energy system that is fleshly. The result will be as Paul highlights in Galatians 5:26 – becoming conceited, provoking one another and envying one another.

Interpretation: The distortion of the Mosaic Law into a performance based obedience code was a system of this cosmos since it distorted the grace that was available in a correct understanding of the Law. The distortion of the teaching of the Law by such groups as the Judaizers aligned with the power of the cosmos and not the power of God.

Principle: Humans crave power to deal with the pressures of living in a fallen world.

Principle: The power of the cosmos is a real power, but it is a counterfeit empowerment system.

Principle: The power of the cosmos is self-destructive because it includes the illusion of independence and self-sufficiency.

Principle: Arrogance embraces the power of the cosmos.

Principle: The prince of darkness desires all to be blinded by the illusion and never realize their need to depend upon divine power.

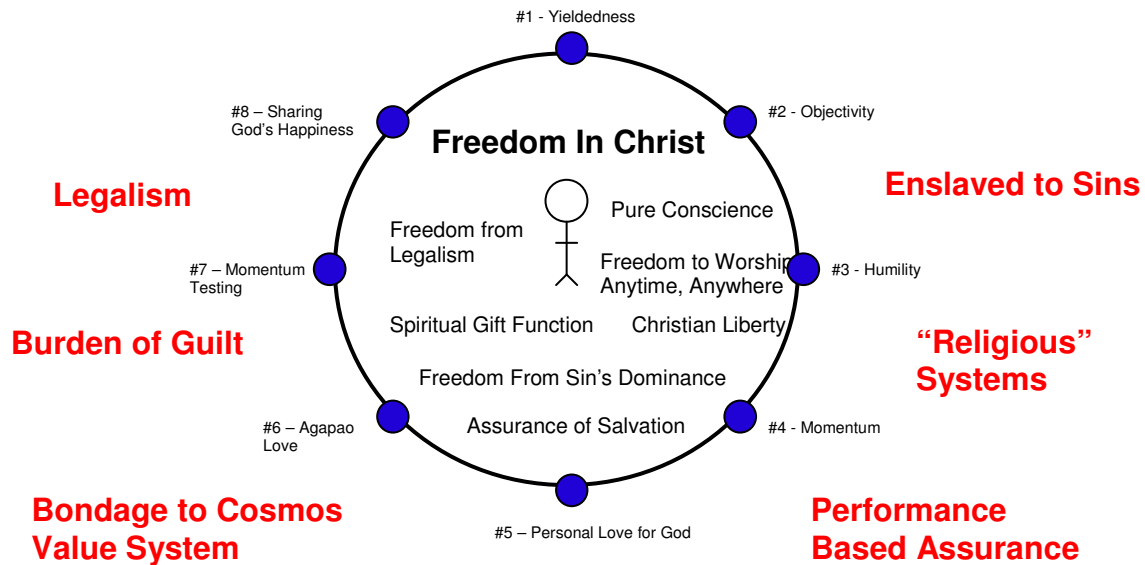
Principle: Humility embraces the power of God.

Application: We must rely upon divine empowerment to remain insulated from the illusion of the power of the cosmos.

Application: Have you learned or are you learning to recognize how the illusion of the cosmic system of empowerment has blinded you to the reality of life in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Application: Have you any examples of where you knew you were operating in God's system of empowerment vs. the power of the cosmos?

THE INSULATING PROTECTION OF THE DIVINE POWER SPHERE



Bearing and Sharing Burdens (6:1-5)

Instead of provoking one another or envying one another, the believer should demonstrate agape love. How? Paul highlights how this applies in the scenario where another believer has succumbed to the desires of the flesh in verses 1-5 of Chapter 6.

6:1 BRETHREN, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

The Greek word translated "trespass" here is the Greek word *paraptoma* (Gr. *paraptwvmati*) and means a false step and conveys the idea of something that is not habitual, but more of an aberration (cf. 1 Cor 5:11; Rom 16:17). Thus, *paraptoma* is a direct contrast to *stoicheo* and one can picture believers walking in formation and in concert with the leading and guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit and all of a sudden, one trips or is overtaken by a sin. How do we interpret Paul's instruction to the believer in view of the context of this passage? Wuest provides a good analysis.

The primary thing that they needed to be set right about was not the act of sin which they committed, but that they had wandered off the right road of grace and were stumbling in the quagmire of self-dependence and legalism. To set the sinning brother right with reference to his act of sin would be helpful, but that would still leave him on the wrong road with the result that he would go on being surprised at the entrance of sin into his life. Thus, the Galatians who had not become infatuated with legalism, were exhorted to bring back those who had [become so infatuated], into the grace way of living the Christian life. That would repair the damage caused by the Judaizers in this life, and equip him to go on living his life in the right way. He would be restored to his former good condition.

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This was the apostle's attempt to repair the damage caused by the Judaizers, using those Galatians who had not succumbed to their wiles.⁶

Note that Paul provides guidance to the spiritual (not the unspiritual) believers. The non-spiritual believer is not a part of this formation of believers who have yielded to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, such a non-spiritual believer is more likely to be tempted to think he is something that he is not. He could easily become "conceited" (5:26), i.e. independent minded and full of a sense of self-sufficiency. Note also that this is restoration to a former spiritual condition and a right way of thinking about the spiritual life (based upon the context).⁷

In verses 2-5, Paul indicates that on the one hand, spiritual believers are to "bear one another's burdens" (v. 2). On the other hand, each believer is to "bear his own load" (v. 5). How can both be true? The word translated "burden" in verse 2 is the word *baros* and it is combined with the verb *bastazo*. In combination, the two words refer to bearing a burdensome weight. In context, that weight is the unnecessary and wrongful adherence to the Mosaic Law (specifically the practice of circumcision) as an additional requirement for salvation. This was being promoted by the Judaizers and was a heavy weight. Contrast this with Jesus' statement – "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." (Matt 11:30).

The burden or load in verse 5 is different. It is the Greek word *phortion*. This is a word that referred to a pack carried by a marching military man and has direct correlation to the word *stoicheo* used by Paul earlier. Thus, Paul is emphasizing the fact that each believer is responsible to yield to the Holy Spirit and march in step with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We'll continue our analysis of this passage in our next lesson.

⁶ Ibid., 165-166.

⁷ While this passage may have some applicability to the restoration of leaders who have succumbed to sin, we must give careful consideration to the context as we have examined it.