

“Walking In the Spirit”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, October 13th, 2013

Good to see everybody out this morning. It's been a good month and a half. We've been teaching and preaching from the book of Galatians these last couple of months, and how many have gotten a blessing? I've learned a lot and hopefully everyone here has as well. One thing that stands out for sure is that human nature, behavior as people, it never changes; it's something that's constant. It something that was the same in the days of Adam and Eve; it was the same in the days of Moses; it was the same in the days of Christ Himself, and it's the same now. But I'll tell you one thing: Jason, you were talking about your time of encouragement with the youth yesterday, and it got me thinking about how in this day and age, we fight so many battles, because a lot of times that the decadence of this world does seem to be more prominent, that it is that kid that's off to the side, just quiet, seeking for some answers, and one thing that I'm going to say is that God's ways never go out of style. I'm going to say this much: There's a verse that talks about I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and one thing I'm going to say is that I'm proud of this Gospel, and I'm not talking about proud in a prideful way, but it's something that we live and move and have our being in Christ (Acts 17:8). That's something that's ongoing, that's something that's a daily walk with Him; it's not something that we put on the back burner for just a certain day of the week.

Parrish preached last week from chapter 4 and I'd like to highlight a couple of points. He mentioned that, in ministry, there's going to be a lot of times when we're not always going to feel like it. I think we've kind of got that down; we understand that, but, when you don't feel like it, then you don't feel like it. God's not taking break—we have to be alert, we have to be ready, we have to be instant in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). I'll tell you one thing, because I know that there are a lot of struggles in this life, but we're going to get into this later on in the message, we do have a joy in God—the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). One other point that you made, Parrish, which I think really stood out to all of us, there are so many people that are thinking, “Don't tell me what to do.” Remember that old movie, “Rebel without a Cause?” that title really seems to sum up the mindset of a lot of people these days, and the thing about it is, we're not telling anybody what to do. Our goal isn't to bash somebody, or try to get people to believe what we believe just for our own sake. The Bible talks about instructing those that oppose themselves. The Bible does talk about being compelling (Luke 14:23), so it is a matter of being persuasive (Acts 19:26), and being fully persuaded in our own lives (2 Timothy 1:12). It's also a matter of not being ashamed, but also looking at it like, “Okay, I want to see others know it, but, it's not a matter of being forceful about it.” We can't force our beliefs on others, that's never going to happen. That went away with the Crusades—I don't know how many here have read about the Crusades, back around AD 800 to 1200. It was a tragic time, a terrible time. Really. I would say more than anything, it gave Christianity a bad name. I realize that we're not going to be able to force anyone to believe. It's up to each individual to be fully persuaded in their own mind that following Christ is the best way to live.

I just want to share one nugget: We had a fellowship gathering this past Wednesday night, and some different people gave some testimony and shared some things, and, Sonya, you got up there, and you talked about how you listen to the radio a lot of times when you go to

work, and there was a song, “What a Beautiful Day for the Lord to Come.” The thing is, I was thinking to myself, “You know, I haven’t heard that song in a long time, myself,” and I always liked it. The very next morning, I got up, and, I swear, it was like, in my mind. I appreciate that. I appreciate those nuggets of gold that can sustain us throughout the week. They’re the kind of things that give us strength for the journey.

Galatians 5:1-4 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

The idea that I think the world tries to present is that Christianity is stifling. It’s true; we don’t get to do everything we want, or to live any old way we want. One thing that our founding pastor used to say was “If any old way will do, then no way at all will do.” When it comes to God’s Word, there is a standard. The freedom that it’s talking about is not freedom to do what we want. It’s freedom from the fear of death. I want to touch on a verse in Hebrews, because I honestly believe that the Spirit of God is going to deal with everybody. I don’t care if somebody claims to be agnostic or atheist, or this or that or the other... The grace of God hath appeared unto all men (Titus 2:11). We’re going to get into a little later about fairness, about what’s fair and what’s not fair. I remember when I was a kid—I think I was about eleven—I don’t know if it was a show that I had seen, it was something where they were dealing with the afterlife, but it was not like they were talking about the Gospel. It was something that was just terrifying, especially when you think as a little kid, it’s like—I wasn’t a Christian at that time, and I didn’t have an understanding of what it would take to know God,, to actually have my sins washed away, to have my sins remitted, to have a daily walk with God, to be born again. I know we’re preaching and teaching from the book of Galatians but I want to read this passage from Hebrews because it helps make this point about freedom.

Hebrews 2:14-15 *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

I can stand here and tell you today that that freedom takes away that fear of death. People are subject to that bondage all their lives. I realize that this is coming out of the Old Testament; this was fresh off that timeframe where the Gospels were preached, Christ came, and the new Testament was very new. People didn’t have that promise in the Old Testament. In the book of Job, it says, “...all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” (Job 14:15) People had an understanding and a belief that God’s not going to leave them in death; that He’s going to have a promise, that He’s going to have something for them. Think about how often we see people weighed down with the cares of this life, worries of this life, riches of this life. I’m not talking about having goals, I want to make that clear, because we should all have some goals. We should all have aspirations in this life, whether it’s to learn a language, whether it’s to do well on your job, whether it’s to do well in the military, whether it’s to have a healthy relationship with family and friends, as much as possible. Christ talked about, “As

much as is possible, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:18) It’s not like we’re trying to look for enemies—we’re going to have enemies, because people are going to dig their heels in the sand, and they’re going to make themselves enemies, because they oppose what this Gospel stands for. We have to look at it like, where is our hope? I don’t mean like, “I hope that I can get a degree,” and some of you have, and I applaud that, and I’m proud of you for that. Some of you have had—like those prayer requests that Jesse and Tina have read about or the answers to prayer, about the blessings that people have received. We’re trying to do as well as we can in this life. I’m not talking about doing it at the risk of compromising our stances in God, but I’m not working a job so I can say, “Hey, pay me as little as possible.” I realize that we have quite a range of ages of the people in this room; I’m talking about the goals of looking beyond this world and thinking where we’re going to be in 25, 50, 100 years. I’m talking about after this life. Some of us are closer to that time, some of us are quite a ways off. I’m not talking about just sitting there thinking about death every day of my life. I will say this, we’ve got to know the end from the beginning. Joe and I were talking about, I think it’s in Isaiah (Isaiah 46:10), being able to see the end from the beginning, and the promises that were made, in the Old Testament and in the New, in the last days, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased (Daniel 12:4). It talks about because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12). These things are out there. I mean, if you just look at the last hundred years or so, the Industrial revolution, which is what we’re kind of in the aftermath of, I mean it’s still ongoing, but I think now it’s more of a computer revolution... But, you look at, not just the population growth, but some of the technology that’s just absolutely mind-boggling. One thing I’m going to say about that is this, we can’t get so caught up or enamored of the technological things of this world that we’re forgetting the spiritual things of God.

Galatians 5:7-9 *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

This message from Apostle Paul to the Galatians is as applicable to us today as it was then. Bearing in mind that we have a society today that tries to look over the Word of God, or maybe to look past it, but not really to think of it as being as applicable today as it was a hundred years ago or five hundred years ago or whatever. Well, getting back to human nature, that’s what the Bible is all about—it’s about the ways of people. It’s not about technology; it’s not about geography; it’s not about we built this new type of car, or we built this new type of airplane, or we built this new kind of I-phone, or whatever the case might be. It’s about behavior. It’s about human nature, because that’s always going to be constant. So what are some of those reasons that are hindering people today from obeying the truth and enduring to the end? What are some of the hindrances? People don’t feel like there’s enough proof? People don’t feel like there’s enough excitement? People thinking that it’s just too difficult? We’ve already talked about some of the challenges, but, one thing’s for sure, Christ said, **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** That’s one of those things where I remember seeing it on a billboard—I’ve shared this before—this was just maybe a month after I got saved, I and a friend were riding up through Maryland and Delaware on the eastern shore, but, I remember I was riding with a friend and we were visiting some family, and I remember just seeing it. I mean, it was just a billboard, it was something that I had read before at that point—because I had seen it—and it was a comfort. It was one of those things where, “Why

does Satan try to make it seem so difficult and so overwhelming and so impossible? because he's going to fight this message more than he fights anything else. There is nothing else in this world that Satan is going to fight more than the Truth of God, being born again, baptized in Jesus' name, and the whole balance. I'm not talking about just a few points, or just starting. I'm talking about, he's going to fight it, because that's what saves people. That's what keeps us, and that's what gives us a hope, and that's what keeps us going, this week, this month, this year, next year, and ongoing. That's what gives us depth within ourselves. We talk about in the parable of the sower where it talks about some of them that fell away (Luke 8:14) where it says that they had no root within themselves (Mark 4:17). That's something that has always stood out to me, because what exactly is root within yourself? I'm not going to say that it means a million different things but I'm going to say that it means I have enough in God to know that I can make it the entire distance, that I can make the entire journey, and it's convincing enough. How many other signs do we need? We had a Bible study just a few months ago about how many more signs from God do we need? How much more iniquity does there have to be? How much more financial ruin or unemployment or crisis this of bombings in the middle east or terrorist attacks? I think I've got a long, long list of evidence, or proof that God is real. How many are with me?

Galatians 5:14-16 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

That's actually the title of today's message, "Walking in the Spirit." If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, then we're going to understand that concept. We live in a physical world, and we have daily contact with other people, on our jobs, at school, the list obviously goes on. So, the big challenge is, is it easy to walk in the Spirit or isn't it? Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh? It's a battle? I would say, it is and it isn't. I know that sounds pretty double-minded but the point is, it's easy when we focus on knowing God, when we study the Word of God, when we look to make spiritual decisions, when we're looking to gather together instead of scatter abroad, when we're looking to share with people, but also share with ourselves. We've got to have time with ourselves and God, in order to appreciate the blessings of God. I would say that some of the reasons that people don't, maybe they feel like they've been disrespected, or dissed in modern terminology, and cop an attitude. I want to elaborate a little bit on the fairness, because the only thing I've found that's fair in the word of God is the promise that God would pour out his spirit on all flesh and that the grace of God that brings salvation will appear to all men. So, God's giving every person an opportunity, and this is going to help to jump into my next point: Whether you grew up rich or poor or somewhere in between, whether you are rich or poor or somewhere in between now, God can use you. God can use me. I was out in New York a couple of weeks ago; I was in White Plains, New York, which is a pretty affluent part of the state, it's a little bit north of New York City. I had gone across the street and I was at an Outback, and got to talking with the waitress a little bit, she was a nice girl, and she was telling me that she felt like she kind of grew up with a silver spoon in her mouth; she had a pretty wealthy background. I don't have any reason to believe that she was making it up; I mean, I don't believe that was the case. I thought to myself, "You know what? God could still use her." God could use somebody from the poorest of the poor, from the absolute worst ghetto, to the absolute wealthiest. It comes down to, on the day we seek Him with a whole heart, we'll find Him (Jeremiah 29:13). If we want to have an understanding of what God teaches, it

doesn't matter what our background was. It doesn't matter where we are currently at, either. We come from a variety of backgrounds. I can look around and obviously we have a racial makeup of different people, people from different countries, people of different ages, people of different careers... and that's good, because that's what God's Kingdom is all about. It's not like we're all supposed to be a bunch of clones. I hear in the media about, "Oh, we're going to clone this sheep," or "we're going to clone this..." I don't want to be cloned, and I don't want to see any clones, as far as human beings are concerned. I want to read a passage in Ecclesiastes, because it talks about oppression, and it talks about the hardship that exists, that's real, that's something that we can feel.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 *So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.*

I'm going to tell you today that Christ is a comforter. The Bible says that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall teach all things to your remembrance (John 14:26). That's something that, even if we have a more difficult time, as far as, say, financially speaking, because that's one thing that has really plagued this country for a number of years. That's one of those things, and I try to keep up with what's going on in other countries, I believe the unemployment in Spain is like 25%... We've seen what's happened in Greece. It's saddening, it's appalling, it's frustrating; there's a lot of blame that could be directed, but, ultimately, this is where we're at. What are we going to do from this point forward? There might not be a whole lot I can do, other than to get my own house in order, to be as financially frugal as I can be—we're not just talking about that, but that is something that does have an impact on us. First and foremost, I've got to have my spiritual house in order. God's not going to ask, "How big was your bank account? Where did you work? How many years did you work there? Where did you travel to? How many vacations did you take?" None. Well, I took a nice one earlier this year, and you know what? It was a good time. There was some good fellowship, and we got a chance to visit with some people in the ministry, too. God gives us these opportunities. I know that some of you do enjoy travelling. When you do get the chance to go visit the churches, or other fellowships, or other people that are in different places, take them. Take those chances. I wanted to read that verse because it doesn't paint a very rosy picture—even though that was written in Ecclesiastes, probably four thousand, or whatever number of years ago, it just goes to show that human nature, that oppression, has been around a long time. It's something that affects all of us, especially when you're on the receiving end of it. Looking back at my own life, I would say that we were in the middle—we had some hard times, but we had some really good times. We had good relationships; there were some fights, but I would have to say, again, don't let that be a stumbling block to you; don't let that prevent you from taking what God has for you now. Or, when somebody does talk, "Oh, this is really bad. Oh, I have it really rough," when there's so much misery, and then, the next thing you know, there's sort of a competition as to had it the toughest. "Oh, I know I had it tougher; I had it ultimately tough." Joe and I watched this movie last night that Kirk had given me, called, "[The Way Back](#)." It takes place during World War II after the invasion of Poland. There were several people that were actually taken to Siberia, and they were held in—they weren't concentration camps, but they were definitely as bad as they could get. Then some of these guys had done something, and they ended up in the mines, and they were like, "I'm not going to live another year in these mines." It's a true story;

that's what I appreciated about it. So, there were several of them that escaped. So then they were hiking through this vast wilderness in the Southern part of what was then the Soviet Union, trying to get into Turkey, or trying to get into a country that would be friendly. These guys—and there was a lady that joined them for a pretty good length of time, as well—walked over the Himalayas and into China and into India, and, I believe, Nepal. I was watching this, spellbound, thinking about hardship, and there were a couple of scenes where one guy said, “I can't take it anymore.” I'm making a point here. If we could peek to see who had it toughest, who had the most hardship, nobody's going to win. Eventually it's going to be pride. It becomes a pride competition: “Oh, I had it worst!” “I had it pretty good!” Thank God. Honestly, what's wrong with saying, “You know, I think I had a pretty good upbringing?” These days, it's seems like if you can convince people that you had an absolutely horrible upbringing, then they will sympathize with you. I'm not looking for sympathy, I'm just looking for people who will respect what God has for us, but also to seek God on their own, or myself to seek God on my own.

Galatians 5:19-26 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

If you get a chance, I'd like to point out that this passage has a lot of similarities with a passage in Deuteronomy that talks about the blessings of God and the curses as well (Deuteronomy 28). It goes into extreme detail about if you follow God, then he will bless you in just every way imaginable, but if you turn from God, you're going to be cursed with a curse, and here's what it's going to be like. It's almost as if you can feel it. Recently we had a couple of fellowship gatherings in the last month and a half, and the main focus was addictions. One thing I think we all learned is that one addiction might affect Matthew differently than me and vice versa. One thing that might affect Alex might be different than what affects me. Something that might affect Rebecca might be different... The goal is not to say, “Okay, I do these things, and I don't do those things, so I can check off the box.” God's going to give us power, He's going to give us an ability—and these things do crop up, but God can give us the victory over them. It's not a matter of living in defeat; I think that is the biggest component of Christianity is that there is a victorious life that God has for us and wants for us. He wants us to be successful. If we walk in the spirit, then we're going to have the fruits of the spirit. I know that joy is an indicator of where we really are in God. You can have joy when you have hard times, when you have tragedy. I'm not undercutting the effect of tragedy; we've all had some kind of tragedy. We've all had hardships, and, you know what? Some have been harder than others. There have been people in this room who are quiet and respectful, and they've been through a lot of hardship, and they're not blowing their horn about it; they're not sitting there bragging about it, but they got through it. My mother knew woman that was from Latvia, and she and her parents came over just after World War II, and they were actually in a concentration camp for a period of time. I

remember, as a kid, going to visit them, and, you know, I don't think you could meet two kinder people. They were like the kindest, friendliest, gentlest... and they went through *that*. They went through something which you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. It's something that happened; it's unfortunate; that's human nature, but, I've got good news for you: We're nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11). I'm not going to turn to it, but in Romans it says that in the midst of this, through all that we go through, the day-to-day struggle, the week-to-week, month-to-month, whatever the case might be, the pain—to temper along with that there is a lot of joy, a lot of blessings, a lot of things to be thankful for, to look forward to; it's not all drudgery. Whether you're in Christ or not, you're going to deal with all of those things, anyway. Those things are going to happen. You're going to be faced with those emotions. Going back to that passage where it says that God hath given us power over the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15), and I know that for me, and talking to a lot of other people here, that it was the same fear, it was like, "I just didn't know." I'm not talking about being in the midst of combat, "Are you afraid to die?" "No, I'm not afraid to die." "Good!" I think that there is a degree of heroism that arises out of that kind of chaos, and that kind of warfare, but, if you don't know where your soul is at in God, find out! Find out, and make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10), and make it so that you know where you stand with God. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but we also have a hope in God. The secret things belong to God, but the things that He's revealed to us are enough to know His will and do it. God has given us legs, and He has given us the ability to actually know what we need to do to save our souls.

Thank you very much.

