

Galatians 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Analysis

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Paul's solution to the flesh problem. "This I say then" (legō de, λέγω δέ)—I say, I command. "Walk in the Spirit" (pneumati peripateite, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε)—keep on walking by/in the Spirit. Peripateō (περιπατέω) means to walk about, conduct one's life. Present imperative: continuous action. Christian living is Spirit-directed walking, not law-directed striving.

"And ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (kai epithymian sarkos ou mē telesēte, καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε)—and you will absolutely not carry out/complete the flesh's desire. Strong double negative ou mē: emphatic promise. Walk by the Spirit, and fleshly desires won't be accomplished. This isn't sinless perfection but practical victory. The key to holiness isn't trying harder to keep law but walking by the Spirit. Law reveals sin but can't conquer it; the Spirit conquers sin law merely exposes. This is vital: sanctification, like justification, is by faith and Spirit, not works and law.

Historical Context

Paul presents third way between legalism and license: Spirit-walking. Legalists think rules prevent sin; libertines think freedom permits sin. Paul teaches Spirit-empowered living overcomes sin naturally. This isn't mystical passivity but active faith-dependence on the Spirit's power. Walking implies intentionality and effort, but the power source is Spirit, not flesh. This revolutionized Christian ethics:

morality flows from relationship with the indwelling Spirit, not external legal compulsion. Romans 8:1-13 expands this theme extensively.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to 'walk in the Spirit' throughout your daily activities and decisions?
2. How do you experience the Spirit's power overcoming fleshly desires rather than relying on willpower and rules?
3. In what areas are you trying to conquer sin through law-keeping rather than Spirit-walking?

Interlinear Text

Λέγω	δέ	πνεύματι	περιπατεῖτε	καὶ	ἐπιθυμίαν	σαρκὸς
This I say	then	in the Spirit		and	the lust	of the flesh
G3004	G1161	G4151	Walk	G2532	G1939	G4561

οὐ μὴ τελέσητε

G3756	G3361	fulfil
		G5055

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:8 (Spirit): For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

1 Peter 2:11 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

2 Corinthians 7:1 (Spirit): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Romans 6:12 (Parallel theme): Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Ephesians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

1 Peter 1:14 (Parallel theme): As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

1 Peter 1:22 (Spirit): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

1 Peter 4:6 (Spirit): For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Colossians 2:11 (Parallel theme): In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Galatians 3:17 (Parallel theme): And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.