

## 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019: Life in Spirit 7: Living by the Spirit Go4th

Coming towards the end of our series on the Spirit – thought about what it means for us as individuals and as a community – who we are, how we grow, how we can use gifts to play our full part as followers of Jesus. So what's the advice as we look forward as a church?

**Very simple: 'Live by the Spirit'.** Now you know who the Holy Spirit is and why the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity matters so much – go and do it. In this particular passage from Galatians, Paul contrasts this kind of life with a life bound by religious rules and regulations. He says that's not what we're about now as Christians. We live in a whole new reality.

But what does that reality look like? Very quickly, Paul gives us 4 bits of advice. Can only skate over them today, but worth naming anyway:

**Crucify the sinful nature.** Strong image, takes us back to Good Friday and the cross. But it reminds us that when Jesus dies, he not only nails our sin to the cross, paving the way for our forgiveness. If we follow Jesus, we also copy this same pattern in a spiritual sense. We die to the old way of life – and Paul gives a good list, doesn't he, of what that looks like in verses 19-21.

There's the obvious candidates, but *it's the less outrageous ones that we probably ought to be most careful of*: ambition, envy, discord. These apply to every person in every community, and can wreck any sort of community life. To live by the Spirit is to live a life of selfless service, contentment and peace, as far as it depends on us.

**Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit** – this is the famous bit. Note how Paul contrasts the *acts* of the sinful nature with the *fruit* or *virtues* of the Spirit. In other words, if we cultivate the right character, we'll naturally do the right things. What can we pray for today, which of these virtues is God growing in you at the moment? To live by the Spirit is to form the right character rather than do the right things.

**Keep in step with the Spirit** – again, sounds obvious, but what Paul is saying is that we keep listening to God. We try and match our strides with His. So we don't just pursue general goals, we ask, what is God up to now? Where's He going? Are we in step? To live by the Spirit is to keep listening so we can keep up.

**Carry each other's burdens.** Note: all one passage, chapters are added later. This is very much part of the same piece of teaching. Time and time again the bible tells us to look out for each other. Here he goes even further and says: if you want a law, a rule, then Christ's law is this – care for other, help people out. Is there someone's burden we can help to carry today. (Helds) To live by the Spirit is to carry each other through the hard stuff of life.

There's so much here, but the message is simple. We're not bound anymore by the pride of formalised religion. God is in our hearts by his Spirit. Teaching us, shaping us and guiding us keep in step with him. Let's live by that Spirit today and into the future. Amen.