

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part Sixteen

Last time we were left with the conclusion that there were only two alternatives to our spiritual lives:

a) **Under the law and dominated by sin** because of our inability to keep the law perfectly and by centring our thoughts on the law we stirred up sin in our lives;

b) **Under grace and led by the Holy Spirit**, free from the law and sin.

You cannot mix the two ways. You are either following one way or the other.

Romans 6:14 [NIV] *“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

*“... not under the law **but** under grace”*

What does this mean?

Romans 6:15 [NIV] *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”*

When under grace we are then **led by the Holy Spirit**, you **cannot** say ‘as I’m not under the law I can do anything I like,’ for the Holy Spirit will **never** lead us to do anything that is displeasing to God.

Romans 8:14 [NIV] *“because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

The word ‘son’ here means mature sons – **not** used to describe a baby or child.

To become a Child of God we have to be born of the Holy Spirit but to become a Son of God we have to be led by the spirit to maturity.

Unless we are led by the spirit after our spiritual re-birth we continue to remain spiritual children [immature] all our lives.

2 Peter 3:18 [NIV] *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.”*

The alternative to keeping the rules is to be led by Holy Spirit to maturity.

Little children need rules, grown-ups develop character.

Galatians 5:16-18 [NIV] *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.**”*

One or the other.

We either remain children needing the law, or mature people led by the Holy Spirit and developing the fruits of that relationship.

1 Timothy 1:8-11 [NIV] *“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”*

If we are made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ the law is **not** for us.

The law was made for this list of people who are all *“doing their own thing without any influence of God”*.

Galatians 5:19-21 [NIV] *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Notice how similar this list is to those in **1 Timothy 1:8-11** who still need the law as they are not by faith allowing an active Holy Spirit in them to bring them to maturity. They are still immature children of God.

Hebrews 6:1-6 [NIV] *“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”*

If we continue to act like the Galatian church we are putting our eternal life at risk, and putting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to shame, by not considering it sufficient for our salvation.

In Galatians, Paul uses another Old Testament allegory.

The two sons that were born to Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac; again, they are types.

Ishmael was from the bond maid Hagar, a type of the Old Covenant of the law.

Ishmael was the product of the flesh, that is Abraham doing his best to achieve God’s purpose by his own effort.

Abraham lost patience and took the initiative into his own hands to have the promised heir by Hagar, his maid, which by the culture and custom of that day was **not** immoral but was **not of faith**.

Romans 14:23 [NIV] *“But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”*

The Bible tells us that whatever is **not** based on faith is sin.

God forgave Abraham but he paid a very heavy price for his actions and the price is still being paid today 4,000 years later.

It is the descendants of Ishmael who are the main problem for the descendants of Isaac.

A very strong warning that it doesn’t pay to beget things in the flesh, for we have to live with them.

One interesting fact about Abraham is that his problems resulted **not** in failing to do what God said but doing **more** than God told him, presumptuous sins, taking the initiative away from God.

Psalms 19:13 [NIV] *“Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.”*

Very often the hardest thing for us to do is to wait on God to do what He has promised in His own time, which will be the best for everyone.

Galatians 4:29 [NIV] *“At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.”*

The “*flesh*” always persecutes the “*spirit*”. This continues to today.

Galatians 4:30-31 [NIV] *“But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.”*

Abraham on two recorded occasions took the advice of his wife Sarah.

The first to have a son by Hagar [**Genesis 16:1-3**] which was a wrong decision.

The second occasion, in a fit of temper, counter-acting on her own advice.

Sarah told Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael [**Genesis 21:9-11**] which in this case was a right decision – God agreed with it.

What this tells us is, when the child of faith and grace comes there is **no** house room for the slave-woman [the law] and her son [the products of the flesh]

Isaac was **not** the product of Abraham’s ability but the supernatural intervention of God.

Only this is acceptable to God.

All we can do of our own ability is **never** sufficient to please God.

We have to operate on the supernatural level.

This is **not** to become super-Christians, it is to be Christians, for we cannot live the Christian life on the level of our own ability.

Read the Sermon on the Mount and honestly ask ourselves just how much of this can I do of my own ability?

If we have known grace and we go back under the law we are out of grace; we cannot be under the law and under grace at the same time.

The problem with the Galatian church was that having accepted God’s Grace through the death of Jesus Christ **they were influenced by Jewish teachers to go back and keep the law of Moses.**

Galatians 1:6-9 [NIV] *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”*

Paul was more upset by the Galatian church than any of the other churches he wrote to.

It was the only one he did not thank God for.

Paul even thanked God for the church at Corinth, with all its adultery, incest, drunkenness and divisions, Paul could deal with that:

But the Galatians, going back under the law after being offered grace, that caused Paul to forget to thank God for them, and he went straight into addressing their problem, powerfully.

Paul then later in the letter to the Galatians brings up circumcision.

Paul is speaking to people [Gentiles] who were circumcised in order to keep the law of Moses.

Genesis 17:9-14 [NIV] *“Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner, those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

A Jewish baby is **not** circumcised to keep the law of Moses but because of the Covenant God made with Abraham, **before** the giving of the law through Moses.

For example: Paul had two disciples, Timothy and Titus.

Timothy was born of a Jewish mother and was therefore legally Jewish, so Paul had him circumcised; but Titus was totally Gentile and Paul fought a long and hard battle not to have him circumcised.

For a Jew circumcision is **not** about keeping the law although it may be in the law.

John 7:22 [NIV] *“Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath.”*

Jesus himself said it was **not** given by Moses but by their father Abraham.

Galatians 5:2-4 [NIV] *“Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is required to obey the whole law. **You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.**”*

You are under obligation to keep the whole law, you cannot choose which parts you will keep and which parts you will reject.

If you try to do this you have “*fallen from grace*”, – **Not under grace, and cut off from Christ.**

James 2:10 [NIV] *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”*

James, contrasting the keeping of the law of Moses with the Royal law, the law of love, agrees with Paul.

Every part of that law has to be kept.

Note this is in the context of living a life of faith as Abraham did.

The “*deeds*” here are **not** the keeping of the law of Moses but the “*actions*” of our faith in Christ and the out flowing of God’s Love by the Holy Spirit that dwells in us.

Romans 6:6 [NIV] *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”*

God through Christ crucifies our old self.

Galatians 5:24 [NIV] *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”*

Our response to this Act of God.

To apply the cross to our own fleshly nature.

Crucifixion is a very painful way to die and entering into this new way of life with Christ is going to involve pain.

In a sense, we have to place the nails in our own hands and feet and identify with Jesus on the cross, as an act of will.

This will involve pain but it is the best way.

1 Peter 4:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”*

Scripture warns us the Christian life will **not** be an easy one.

There are two options: we can suffer God’s way or suffer our own way.

Pain will be involved in both.

Luke 14:25-27 [NIV] *“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. **And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**”*

To be a disciple of Christ is to bear a cross.

1 Peter 2:21 [NIV] *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*

Follow in the steps of Christ through suffering.

We have to say the desires that are in me that are **not** Godly, that is they are **not** of the Will of God, I’m to put them to death, taking my place on the cross with Christ and driving the nails into my own whims, desires and passions.

That is painful but the pain doesn’t last long and leads to something beautiful and wonderful, a life that is truly lived for God.

The second option is to give in to and temporarily satisfy our whims, desires and passions, and end up the same way as this society, a painful way with **no** glorious future.

We all have to take up our cross.

What is our cross?

Definition of cross:

a) the point where our will and God's Will cross

b) the place where our desires die

God will **not** impose the cross on us.

Mark 8:34-38 [NIV] *“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”**”*

If we are following Christ it is the least we can do compared with what He has done for us.

Matthew 10:34-39 [NIV] *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn **“a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”** **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”**”*

Lose or lay down our life to find real eternal life.

When we accept our cross and lay down our lives we are willingly out of loving response to what the love of God has done for us.

Giving up control of our lives to the object of our love, Jesus Christ.

God tells us that in our physical marriages we have to do this.

Ephesians 5:21 [NIV] *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

Matthew 16:24-27 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”**”*

What we may not gain in this world through self-denial will be more than recompensed in the world to come.

Luke 9:23-26 [NIV] *“Then he said to them all: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”**”*

Something we have to do daily.

The cross is the instrument of self-execution and the way of deliverance.

Philippians 3:1-11 [NIV] *“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. **For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself**”*

*have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.** I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Paul, talking about his past life and all he had accomplished by his own strength and his new life in Christ, summed this up in a short but vivid statement.

Paul considered as rubbish all we did and relied on before we accepted Jesus Christ as our only means of salvation with nothing added.

Can we now join Paul and say this is about our new life in Christ alone?