

BUT IF YE BE LED OF THE SPIRIT, YE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW

By Forrest Keener

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. --Gal 5:16-18 (KJV)

To the person who is not led by The Holy Spirit, this may sound like a freedom to walk, or to live, as the flesh may desire. That is error of the plainest and worst variety. To the unregenerate, when Paul says, "Ye are not under the law but under grace," it may mean that they have a freedom to live in a way that disregards the eternal principles of Divine Law. But let us remember that those eternal principles dwelt in God and dictated every moral tenant of the law given to Moses by God. A desire to disregard those disciplines of life is, in fact, rebellion against God, and that desire cannot fully possess the heart of a regenerated person, that is, one who is "Born of the Spirit." (John 3:6)

Remember that Paul says in Romans 6:14, not "**Law** shall not have dominion over you," but "**SIN** shall not have dominion over you." I am not saying that a regenerated person cannot violate God's law. He certainly can and will, but I do say he cannot hate God's law. Those who are truly under grace are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in them, and they will not fulfill, that is to fully and consistently indulge in, the lusts of the flesh.

Now, though we are in the Spirit, we are still in the flesh as well, and the conflict Paul refers to in Romans 7:14-15 continually manifests itself in

us. He says there, *"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."* Paul clearly stated here that he was carnal, sold under sin. Obviously, he was speaking of his fleshly nature, not the inward man, and explaining why he did those things which he hated, while delighting in the law of God after the inward man. Nevertheless, he certainly was not saying that since he was not under the law, he could rejoice in a freedom to walk after the lusts of the flesh.

The statement of my title. **"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."** (Gal 5:18), is fully explained in the following verses. Gal.5:19 - 21. Says, *"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."* Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, according to 1Cor 15:50. That is who, and where, the natural man is, now and forever. He cannot inherit the kingdom of God until he is Born again. Conversely, Gal 5:22-23 tells us what the Spirit produces. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* This is not what the believer produces, but what the Spirit produces. **Against such there is no law.**

Let me try to explain it this way. The man who is born of the Spirit is led by the Spirit. He still has the flesh to contend with, thus he never follows the Spirit perfectly. Nevertheless, his restraints and compulsions are not implemented by a confinement, and fear, of the law. His motivations are the effect of the Holy Spirit, of whom he is born, and who dwells within him, guiding him much more effectively and precisely than the law ever can. What is greater is that he, having been given a new heart, does these proper

things willingly, not grudgingly as if under a compulsion of law, or motivated by the advantages of obedience. He seeks to do what the law prescribes, not because the law demands it, but because the Spirit within leads him voluntarily in that direction.

Let me illustrate it like this. There is a strict law in our state against littering, but my wife and I are not under it. Do I mean we defy or ignore it, or even that we are exempt from the implications and consequences of it? No, we have a spirit within us that makes it a totally moot issue. That law does not effect us all. Actually it is not necessary for us and is not made for us. We hate litter and trash, so we have a little waste basket installed in each car. If there were a \$10,000.00 fine for throwing a sandwich wrapper out the car window it would not effect us one bit. Something within us forbids us to do it, and we quite cheerfully abstain. If trash is thrown on our lawn, or even in the street in front of our house, we immediately pick it up, not because of any law, but because we don't want it there. We are not concerned about the anti-littering laws at all. They have no effect on us, and we do not even think about them, except when we see them violated by others. You see, we have a spirit within us that makes even stricter hygienic demands upon us than those laws.

So it is with our spiritual lives, they are not confined and directed by external laws, that is Moses law, but by the Spirit of God within us, and by whom we are led. The more that Spirit persuades me to follow Christ, the more beautiful life becomes.