On Mission

## (Galatians 5:13-25)

Today as we celebrate the Word and the presence of the Living God, we gather together in Jesus name to find encouragement in the Scriptures. I have entitled this message, “On Mission” and my goal today is to inspire you, reminding you that God intended for life to be an exciting mission, a purposeful, spiritual journey towards his Kingdom. And so, we’re going to read from Galatians chapter 5 and we’re going to talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, how he works in us and through us for his Kingdom purpose.

As you’re finding your place in your Bible or your Bible app, I want to give you just a little bit of the background to help your understanding. In this letter, the apostle Paul is addressing those who had misunderstood his teaching on grace and so he’s trying to get them to understand the supremacy of faith over the Law. He is debating with those who are called Judaizers, legalists who strive to be justified by the law instead of through faith in Jesus Christ, and now he moves from argument to application, from doctrinal to practical, and he says in verse 13,

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:13-16).

And so, the apostle Paul here is describing a conflict that every born-again believer experiences between the flesh and the Spirit, because we all have this sinful nature that we inherited from Adam, our first father. We have this natural tendency to drift away from God instead of drawing closer into a loving relationship with God. And so, there are these passions and desires within us that either drive us toward God or away from God.

“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” (Galatians 5:17-18).

So Paul says, “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” In other words, we won’t live in ways in which we try to manipulate God, our circumstances and others; but instead, he says if we live by the Holy Spirit it leads to a life that is a reflection of Jesus and his character is revealed in our sexuality, our spirituality, and socially in all of our relationships. And so, victory is within our grasp when we serve one another in love, it’s within our control when we live by the Spirit, and today there is absolutely nothing stopping us from experiencing victory, because we were called to be free.

Jesus described it this way in John chapter 8, verse 34. He said,

"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:34-36).

Everyone who sins is a slave to sin, but the one who depends on God’s grace, who yields to God’s spirit, lives for others, and seeks to glorify God will be free indeed. And so, if Jesus sets you free, if the Son sets you free, you will be free from the bondage of the law, the curse of the law, and the penalty of sin, because Jesus died for us on the cross. He died to set us free and that is great news because for the believer it is as simple as receiving his gracious gift and following him as his disciples.

You see, whoever loses their life or thinks less of their life for the sake of Jesus will find it. The apostle Paul describes it as crucifying the flesh, being alive to Christ and dead to sin. He says it this way in verse 24, he says,

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25).

And so, this is our victory, to live by the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit, being in tune with God, living in sync with the Word of God, the will of God, and the ways of God. And yet, so many of us find our lives out of sync, out of step with the Spirit, and so how do we get back into the rhythm, how do we walk in the freedom of the children of God and know his power day by day?

That’s what I want to talk about today, being On Mission, being purposeful in our Christian lives. It’s really about embracing our freedom as believers, picking up our cross and following Jesus, because that was his invitation, that we would die to ourselves, dying to our sinful nature with its passions and desires. That’s what the apostle Paul is telling us, he says, you were called to be free, so live by the Spirit, because it’s the Spirit that brings us into the will of God. No longer is there room in our lives to live according to the flesh, gratifying the desires of the sinful nature, because as believers,

“We died to sin; (and so) how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life… because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (Romans 6:2-4, 7).

You see, Jesus died so that you could be free, and as believers you died with him in your baptism, because you were baptized into his death, and your freedom comes by faith as you live by the Spirit, loving Jesus, and loving one another.

Therefore, our goal as Christians is to be led by the Spirit because it’s the Spirit of God who compels us to a life of fruitfulness that grows through intimacy with Jesus. And so, since we’ve died with him, we’re free to serve one another in love, because we’re not under “obligation to do what our sinful nature urges us to do… (but God tells us) if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. (Because) all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Romans 8:12-14, NLT).

Today, if we’re going to be the children of God, those who are led by the Spirit of God, we’ve got to get on board in the vehicle that God has appointed. And so, it’s like if you want to go shopping, you’re not going to get to the store anytime soon if you don’t first get in the car. In the same way, spiritually you’re not going to get far if you don’t get in the church, because that’s the vehicle that God is using. The Bible says it this way in Ephesians chapter 2,

“You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household” (Ephesians 2:19).

And so, the church is the vehicle, this is God’s house, we’re a big extended family, brothers and sisters loving, encouraging, and protecting one another. God is our father, he’s the one that makes the rules of the household, and so if we’re going to be On Mission, we need to be in the vehicle that God has chosen. We need to be in the church and that’s why the Bible says,

“Let us not give up meeting together… but let us encourage one another…” (Hebrews 10:25).

And so, we participate in the local church because that’s where God ordained that we should be involved in each other’s lives, building each other up, and encouraging one another to stay On Mission.

Now, I understand there are many reasons people have for not going to church, but we need to recognize that the church is a family, and you don’t get to choose your family, it’s not a personal decision. That’s why it’s so important that you remain On Mission, that you’re in a church that loves Jesus, because as the church comes together, we grow stronger together. Proverbs chapter 27 says it this way,

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend” (Proverbs 27:17).

And so, it’s as we gather together as the church, that the Holy Spirit compels us toward a deeper love of Jesus through the Word of God. It’s as we come together around his Word that healthy relationships are built, we’re transformed by the renewing of our minds, and together we become more like Jesus knowing his good, pleasing and perfect will.

This is so important, and as we stay on mission, keeping in step with the Spirit, loving Jesus and abiding in him, he transforms us, and our lives become more fruitful. This fruit comes out in many forms, but universally each believer bears the fruit of:

“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

And as we live by the Spirit, staying On Mission, we find ourselves gratifying the desires of our sinful nature less and less frequently.

“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…” (Galatians 5:19-21).

And so, each occasion for offense become few and far between because of our deepening love for Jesus and a greater commitment to the well-being of others.

Therefore, God’s plan is to build us into a loving family where we’re led by the Spirit because it’s the Spirit that is the power that moves the vehicle. You could say, the Spirit is the gasoline that propels the Church and that’s why the apostle Paul said, “Live by the Spirit…” (Galatians 5:16). And so, we’ve got to daily crucify the flesh so that we can keep in step with what the Spirit is doing in the church and in our lives. It’s his divine power that has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). And so, as we live by the Spirit, we have the resources and power available to break free from earthly limitations and make a difference in the world around us.

This is why it’s vitally important that we remain On Mission and embrace the Spirit of God, allowing him to release his power in us and through us. Because it’s the Spirit who is gifting, empowering, and guiding us, he transforms our lives from black-and-white to living color, from low resolution to high definition, from random to purposeful, from chaotic to meaningful as we are actively involved in the church. And so, my prayer is that each of you would welcome the ministry of the Holy Spirit, being open to what God wants to do through you, so that together we can live by the Spirit and advance the kingdom of God. This is the will of God, that we would be On Mission, and so today more than ever we need to embrace the gift and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The question is, “How do I live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature?” And honestly, there is no single truth that is more important to the believer than what the apostle Paul said to the church in Ephesus. He said, “Be filled with the Spirit,” and so for you and I to walk in victory, we need to embrace the Holy Spirit, learning from him, and allowing him to work in our lives (Ephesians 5:18). That’s why Jesus told his disciples,

“Wait for the gift my Father promised… you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you…” (Acts 1:4, 8).

They did, they waited, and ten days later the Holy Spirit came on all the believers who were waiting. God enabled all the apostles to perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. Disciples like Steven, Philip, and many others were empowered to do extraordinary miracles as they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, God intends for our lives to be a testimony of the Spirit’s power. The Bible says it’s, “His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead…” (Ephesians 1:19-20). And today if you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, his incomparably great power is for you, the Holy Spirit is available to empower you to overcome the desires of your sinful nature, so that you can minister to others and make a difference in this world.

In fact, it’s a command to the church, the Bible says, “Do not get drunk on wine, (which is an example of satisfying the desires of your sinful nature, and) which leads to debauchery. (And so, Paul writes) Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). But the question remains how? And the thing is that God never asks us to do anything that he doesn’t also empower us to do. And so, here is how, listen to these words of Jesus in Luke chapter 11, he said,

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:9-13).

And so, we just need to ask in faith, and our Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

There are some of you today whom God is preparing to do something within you. In fact, the Holy Spirit has been preparing you, giving you a desire to serve in a greater way, and at the same time he’s made you even more aware that you need his power. And so, Jesus ascended into heaven after promising his disciples more of the Holy Spirit, because they needed power, they needed boldness to be witnesses, they needed the Spirit to keep them focused on the mission just like we do today.

Jesus promised power to witness, to love, and to serve, and so the power is there but only if we let him. You see, the Holy Spirit won’t force himself upon us, he won’t push into our lives, but he waits for an invitation. And so, will you ask Jesus today to fill you with the Holy Spirit? Will you receive the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that you can be led by the Spirit and use the gift he has given you to build his Church?

Before we pray, I want you to know that being filled or baptized in the Holy Spirit is not something you have to qualify for, any Christian can ask for the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus is ready to give it. You can pray by yourself or you can ask someone else to pray for you, but what you do need to do is to prepare your heart, because the Spirit is holy and say you need to confess your sins and make your heart ready for his infilling. And then you can simply ask Jesus to baptize you in the Spirit and expect the promise filling with his presence.

Today, there are some of you that know you need the forgiveness of God, you may have even said something in anger to someone you love on the way to church this morning, it may have been a whole carload of people you love, but this is your moment to respond and tell Jesus, “I am sorry, I turn from my sin and ask you to forgive me.” Would you pray with me as we prepare our hearts?

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