

# Walking Free

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Date: 16 November 2025

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[0:00] Thank you, Anna, for that reading and what a passage that we have to speak on this morning. When you prepare for a message like this, you realise that you could speak probably on a multi-week series.

And we would just about cover it, just in these 14 verses. But even more than the passage that we've got to speak, I think Fiona done well in choosing those verses that we spoke this morning before we sang.

Let me just read one to you. And let me just bring us to where we are in this passage. I wasn't planning to say this, but in Romans 8, verse 11, it says, If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, and that word if is just since, since the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

And it just ties so much together. What we are going to speak about over the next short period. So we have this section.

And if you're in this section, and if you've read your Bible, and if you've been on the Christian journey a long time, then you normally know that this is a section that we would normally refer to as life in the spirit, which is why I've chosen, and we could pop it up now, a different title, which is walking free.

[1:26] Because sometimes we just fall into the same mindset when we hear the same words, and we think we've heard it before, we know about it. And it'd be quite easy to take a passage like this, and just to focus on the fruit of the spirit.

And again, you could spend ages just thinking about two verses within there. But we've got 14 verses to get through this morning. And so I'm going to try and do my best to help you understand what is being said here by Paul in this chapter, but also not keep us here for the rest of the day. But we're continuing in chapter 5 in Galatians this morning. It's fallen on from where we left off last week. And we've been thinking about the freedom that we have in Christ.

Depending on which Bible you have with you, that word might be referred to as liberty. But I think for us, we, for most of us, it'll say freedom. And that we have in Christ, that we're not under the law. Now, I'm just going to pause here again, and I know we're going to get sidetracked this morning, but I think these things are helpful to say. Now, when we talk about the law, what we're talking about is the law that was given to Israel.

[2:33] It's that covenant or that contrast, that contract between God and Israel, where there was a list of rules and regulations to govern and to guide and to control the nation.

That's what we're talking about when we're talking about the law in this book. And Paul is really clear on that. And just to pause here for a little second, I wonder, when we come to Christianity, when we come to your friends or your neighbours, or you might even be in here this morning, and your perception is this, that to be a Christian is just to keep a set of rules.

It's just to keep a set of, it's to do the law, right? And I think that is the big misconception. I wonder if you've ever actually spent any time with your friends or your colleagues at work or whatever, and actually told them what it is to be a Christian.

Because that's what the world believes. You've just got to keep this rules. It's a burden on us. And I just want to say that this morning. If you are here and you're not a Christian, then what we're going to say today is largely aimed at Christians, because that is what Paul is writing to when he's in Galatians, he's writing to Christians.

But there's a lot in here that I'm hoping that you will understand and that you'll take away and you'll realise that what we are saying here is not because we are keeping a set of rules or anything else like that.

[3:59] It is because we have received free and full, unmerited grace from God. God's favour towards us. And it's nothing that we have done. It's nothing that we can earn. It's nothing that we can achieve by our own ambition or our own habits or our own actions.

It is because we have received full and free grace from God. And that's something that you can have today as well. It's not something, as we're going to find out when I get into the passage here, it's not something that we have to work towards.

It's not something that we have to earn. It's not something that we can earn. It is God's love and his grace demonstrated on Christ dying on the cross who took the burden off our sin, my sin.

And he can take the burden off your sin this morning. And he can give you peace and rest and reconciliation and salvation. And there's a lot of other Christian words that you'll hear off either through this or in other times.

That can be yours today when you come to God and you submit to him. And you accept and you ask God to be accepted because of the work that Christ done on the cross.

[5:10] And that's kind of the basis that we were thinking about last week. It is the freedom that he has won for us on that cross. Not by keeping a set of rules or by keeping the law.

And that is just as a sidetrack. So let's get back to where we were. But that is just as a sidetrack this morning. That is important for us to understand. And I genuinely, I think, you know, most of us, if we are believers here today, we would be praying.

If you are in today or if you're watching online and you are not in the good of this, if you're not a Christian, then we pray that you come to that realisation that you can have forgiveness with God through what we're about to think about today.

And this is one of the greatest themes that Paul has in this book of Galatians. It is that we have been set free. We've been set free from trying to merit God's favour by keeping a set of rules, which, as I've said already, we couldn't keep anyway.

But here's one of the big questions that we have to then deal with this morning. It is this. If Christ has set us free, how do we actually live free? Or as the word I've put on the screen there, walking free.

[6:16] And we're going to think about this word to walk in a little minute. But to walk or to live, how do we live in the freedom that then Christ has won for us? You know, most Christians grasp the truth of the gospel that Christ has redeemed us by his grace.

As I've said, it is full, unmerited favour from God. And this was independent of law-keeping, the Mosaic law that was given to Israel.

Or any works of anything that we could do. But we struggle with the daily reality of this. And that is what I want to tackle this morning. That is what our passage about this morning is, what is the daily reality?

How do we live this out? How do we walk free? And we're going to think about, in a little title up there, we're going to think about the flesh, we're going to think about the spirit, and we're going to think about the life that truly works.

You know, Paul writes to the Galatians because they were being tempted to return, or because they were not the Jews, they were not keeping the law, to enter into this rule-keeping, this checklist, or religious performance as their form of righteousness.

[7:25] And it was kind of, well, you know, Christ has set you free, that's okay for being converted, being saved, becoming a Christian. But in order to become righteous, in order to live this life, then you've got to go back, or you've got to enter into this kind of way of living.

And our passage gets right to the heart of this message. It's this. A Christian freedom is not a license to sin, or to do as we please, nor is it a return to legalism, as we thought about last week, but it is a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And that's when, when we read these verses that Fiona picked this morning, it just brings that whole piece together. It is a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

You know, Paul presents this life to us as a Christian life that is not, it is not as any human effort of good living, but it is a supernatural walk that is produced only by the Spirit.

It's how the Spirit should transform our everyday actions and our attitudes. And we're going to look at the stark contrast between the two ways of living, freedom from sin and the law, but freedom into Spirit-led living.

[8:42] And some people may get a little bit uncomfortable when we talk about that, because often, as there is a misconception about what happens when we become a Christian, there's a misconception about what it means to be led by the Spirit.

Well, I'm going to give our section, I'm going to give our passage here today three titles. If you're taking notes, you'll get them. If not, they'll come up on the screen as we work through. But it is this. In verses 13 to 15, we're going to think about the call to freedom. You'll see this, it's a kind of reflection of where we were earlier in the chapter. In verses 1 to 13, you'll see that in a couple of verses there, it is the call to freedom.

Then we're going to think about the conflict within. And lastly, we're going to think about the character of the Spirit. Now, I've had to take a little bit of poetic license for that, because normally we would say the fruit of the Spirit.

But in order for me to get my C's, then we're going to just call it the character of the Spirit. And hopefully then we don't end up in the same way of thinking that we always do when we hear the words, the fruit of the Spirit.

[9:47] And as we explore these verses, we're going to see that Christian freedom, it has a unique form, right? It's filled with love. It fights a battle and it forms fruit in our lives.

So let's start with then this call to freedom in verses 13 to 15. Paul opens with this beautiful statement and he says this, For you were called to freedom, brothers. Freedom is not an optional upgrade for the advanced Christian.

It is the calling of every believer. Through Christ's death and resurrection, God issues this divine invitation. Not only to be free, not only to live free, but to walk free.

And as immediately as Paul has written this, he then issues this warning that freedom can be misunderstood. And I think we were having a little bit of discussion, some of the guys here on Wednesday around, maybe that misunderstanding of what actually freedom is.

It's easy to push back and say we're being legalistic or it's legalism when we don't like what we've been told. But freedom can be misunderstood. Paul says this, he says, Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh elsewhere.

[11:04] Paul would use the word of a cloak. You know, we cover up our sinful actions and we put the kind of cloak on of righteousness to pretend that what we're doing is freedom, to pretend it's Christ-like, to pretend it's spirit-led, but actually it's just the flesh underneath wanting to do what we want to do.

Paul says that somewhere else. Christian freedom is not doing whatever we want to do. That's just another, it's just another form of slavery in disguise, if we're honest. It's not expressed in allowing the flesh to control our life.

This is going to be a big thing in this passage. We are controlled, and I'm going to use the word controlled. Sometimes we think of a verse in the Bible and it is constrained.

We're constrained by the love of God. We might use the word guided or governed. That's the kind of idea that we're thinking about. But we've not to allow the flesh to control or to guide or to govern or to constrain the things that we do.

When we're talking about the flesh, just in case you haven't been through this passage before, when we're talking about the flesh, we're talking about the fallen, self-centered, self-indulgent human nature that is within us all.

[12:18] And we're thinking about the full expanse of all of its cravings, all of its desires, all of its appetites, not just the kind of bodily impulses that we might think about when we think about the flesh, when we think about the kind of physical flesh.

It's a human fallen nature. And as Paul is writing this, he must have known our human hearts well enough to write this. You know, if we mistake grace as a permission to sin or a license to sin, as we often refer to it as, then we've misunderstood grace completely.

You know, if you've read any commentaries or any books around this, you'll often see that this word that we have in here, in verse 13, this word opportunity, often that is referred to as an operating base.

It's a military term. And not that I would have come out with that on my own. The smart one in our house is Rachel. I certainly got a three in standard grade English, so you'll see where I get this from.

But the word opportunity that we have there is a word for, it's a military term for a base that is used for operations, you know, as a point for attack.

[13:35] And Paul says here, don't let your freedom that Christ has purchased become the staging ground for fleshly desires.

So if freedom is not serving the flesh or to be controlled or to be governed by the flesh, then what is it? And Paul tells us, it's quite clear.

He says through love we have to serve one another. You know, this is the paradox. This is the kind of complicated bit that when you get your head around it, you kind of see what it is.

Because quite often we stop there and we think we've been free. We are free. But actually, Paul says this, freedom in Christ makes us servants to one another in love.

You know, to love one another as ourselves is to seek that other person's good, their highest good, their well-being at all times. You know, Paul doesn't want them to go back to the law, but he is declaring that what the law actually demands, even though it was not able to help them to produce it in their lives, true Christian freedom or liberty is able to produce.

[14:49] You know, we're thinking about last week, we're thinking about legalism. Well, legalism forces service. You've got to do it because I'm telling you, that's the rule, you've got to do it.

This is how you've got to live. Sin distorts service. But when it comes to the freedom that Christ has given us, Christ frees us to service.

You know, Christian freedom is not freedom, it's not autonomy. It's not, as I've said, it's not to do anything that we would want to do. But Christian freedom, I want you to view it like this. It is the capacity. It is the capacity.

It's the spirit-given capacity to love. You know, Paul kind of brings us back to the Old Testament. He says this, the whole law, and we've put aside the law, but he says the whole law, and you see that in your verse, is fulfilled in one word.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. You know, this is maybe a wee bit of a shock when you think about where we've been in here and we've said that the law's been fulfilled and it's, sorry, the law's been set aside and we're not under the law.

[15:53] But actually, Paul brings us back into alignment with maybe the deepest commandment of the law and it's this, love. But it is love without law-keeping.

It's love without fear. It's love without religious pressure. And it is love that is driven by the desire and the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know, Paul warns the Galatians that if they do not walk in love, then something terrible will happen. It's in verse 15. It says this, but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed by one another.

You know, legalism breeds this biting when we set the rules. And we've actually thought about the flesh trying to control us, but legalism when it comes to Christian living is actually just other Christians trying to control us.

And legalism then breeds this biting at each other. The flesh breeds this devouring of one another. But when it comes to the Spirit, the Spirit breeds within us love.

[16:57] And the question I've got for you then, before we move on to the next point, is this. How do we live out this love? And point two is this. Well, there's a conflict within. It's not going to be easy.

Paul's writing this. You know, Paul reveals to us that there's an inner battlefield in every single Christian. He says this as we get into verse 16.

Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. You know, notice what Paul does say here. He doesn't say try harder. He doesn't say tick the boxes.

He doesn't say memorise the rules. What he asks us to do is to walk in the Spirit. Now, I always listen to Johnny Mac. Or if I give him his Sunday name, John MacArthur.

And if we're going to give... And he reminds us often of this verb, to walk. And it means this, the continuous, habitual direction of life. He kind of gives us...

[17:54] In one of his sermons, he kind of gives the outline of this kind of shift in one's weight, step by step, in reliance on the Spirit. That it's not an emotional experience or some kind of, you know, mystical sensation that goes on when we talk about walking by the Spirit.

But it is our ongoing dependence on him. You know, we could look at it a little bit like this. That this walking in the Spirit is... It implies that there's some kind of cooperation.

You know, the Spirit provides the power. That's the verse that we thought about in Romans chapter 8 and 11. But we have to provide the willing step. The obedience to what the Spirit of God wants us to do.

The way that he guides us. The way that he governs us. And then Paul gives the reason for this walk. The reason that why this walk is necessary for us. He says, You know, sometimes...

And I'll say this kind of tongue-in-cheek. Sometimes... There was a hymn that we... Or a song that we would sing at primary school.

[19:10] Kumbaya, my Lord. Kumbaya. I don't know if anybody has ever sung that. And sometimes that can be used... You'll maybe get it at work. And somebody will maybe say, Oh yeah, we'll just sit around with our legs in a basket singing Kumbaya.

And they're trying to kind of... They're trying to kind of give the impression that Christians just have this... Kind of easy, you know, life to become a Christian.

You know, and it's all peace and joy and love. And we're going to think about these three things. But that's not what Paul is saying to us here. The Christian life is not this peaceful coexistence between these two natures.

The nature that is within us. The flesh and the spirit that has come to take residence in our life. You know, the flesh wants its way. And yet the spirit wants God's way.

And as Christians, we stand in the middle of that tension. And that's why Paul is writing this. He says, you know, these two things are opposed to each other. And because of this, it keeps us from doing the things that we want to do.

[20:16] You know, it's probably safe to say that most, if not all, Christians desire to please God. I don't know really any Christian that really wants to live the Christian life who doesn't have a desire to please him and to live a victorious life.

But this inner war means that the Christian life is not about this kind of passive self-improvement that your colleagues or your friends at university might think that your Christian life is all about.

No, it's about our active dependence on the spirit in the midst of this real conflict. You know, Paul goes on to say, but if you are led by the spirit, you're not under the law.

But here's the idea. It says this, that the spirit, not the law, shapes true Christian behavior. See, we go back to what Graham was talking about last week in terms of legalism, and that was to do with conversion. But legalism in the whole is this, that if we tick the box, if we keep the rules, if we keep the list, then that somehow produces this righteous, spirit-led Christian behavior.

Well, uh-uh. Paul's quite clear here. That does not produce the life that we want. You know, the law, as it was given, it diagnoses sin.

[21:29] It shows us how we are, how we fall short of God's standard. And it is only the spirit that destroys it. The law points to righteousness, and yet it's only the spirit that can produce this.

And then Paul goes on to catalog these works of the flesh. And as I say, because we could spend a whole heap of time in here just thinking about either this list here or the list of the fruit of the spirits, we're going to maybe just categorize them and round them up rather than examine each one.

But before we go through them, let me just say this. This list is not exhaustive. Again, this is a thing we were maybe touching on on Wednesday night in our growth group. It's not exhaustive, but it's

representative.

And just in case the Bible, just in case we think that the Bible doesn't cover a sinful habit that we want to justify, Paul adds at the end of that verse, and things like these.

It's so easy to say, well, it's not in the Bible, and therefore God doesn't have an opinion on it, and therefore I can do it. But you've heard that. You've heard that from a Christian who, and we've got to be careful, and we'll think about how we deal with that as we get into the later part of this chapter.

[22:47] And when we get into chapter 6, we really see how we deal with it. But that is a warning before we get into this list. First of all, we're going to think about things that are sexually immoral or impure.

And this covers every sort of unlawful sexual indulgence. It includes every word. It includes every thought.

It includes every desire or action. And then Paul goes into this idea of idolatry or sorcery or witchcraft.

And it is the pagan religion. It is the worshipping, the created thing rather than the creator. And the word witchcraft, again, your Bible might have sorcery or witchcraft or along those lines.

It's the same word that we derive in our language, the word pharmacy. And it then gives you the idea that the original meaning was the use of drugs, which would heighten the appeal to the occult or the pagan powers.

[23:50] Where then Paul covers over some things. And if you've got your Bible open, you might just want to read them there for yourself. But it is these kind of relational sins. The jealousy, the fits of anger, the rivalries, the arguing, the quarreling.

Those types of things. He then covers off these self-centred lifestyles. And lastly, he thinks about this in the ESV.

I think actually maybe in the NIV it'll maybe say sensuality. But it is this, it is sensual indulgence. It is just that we live according to our senses. What we can taste, what we can touch, what we can see, what we can hear, what we can smell.

And we just live according to what is in front of us. And we go after that and we want to tantalise our senses in that way. And Paul has that list of things that are works of the flesh.

It is what the flesh produces. But why this list? Why does Paul give us this list? Well, he wants us to recognise the fleshly patterns of behaviour in ourselves.

[24:59] This flesh is not just simply bad behaviour in that sense. It is this deep orientation towards self.

Self-gratification. Self-protection. Self-indulgence. Self-exaltation. And we have this grave warning. He says, those who practise these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You know, he's not speaking about here the occasional strain across the line or the struggle and failure that each and every one of us have to deal with.

The point is the persistent, unrepentant practice of as a lifestyle. Because if that is the case, if that is your lifestyle, if that is what is dominating in your life, then it may be an indication or a proof that the Spirit of God is not present.

Now, I don't say that to unsettle anyone. And I don't say it for us to judge and look at other people. But just consider in your own heart, if that was the pattern of your life and that is all that is in your life, then it's maybe an indication.

[26:11] That the Spirit of God is absent. But as I say, Paul doesn't write that there for us to be necessarily troubled by that.

As we've thought before, and I was in Kids Church last week, so I don't know exactly if it was said. But once a Christian, always a Christian. Once you are saved, you can never lose your salvation. And the reason being is that when you were taken from out under the law and you were given God's unmerited favour. And we're going to think about it when we talk about crucifying the flesh. But when that happened, the Spirit of God took up residency in your life. It's not something that you get later. It's not something that grows. It's nothing like that. You get it when you are saved.

And you can never lose that. So don't be put off if we all will, because we have the flesh and because we have this battle, this conflict within. There are going to be times where you fall into sin.

[27:10] But it's how we deal with that. But for the true believer, for the Christian, for the person who has the Spirit of God within them, that

will not be the bent of their life. And we should take comfort in that.

So here's a question. If the flesh produces these works, then what does the Spirit produce? And we're going to get into probably the best part of this chapter, right?

The heart of the Christian life. And it is this character of the Spirit, or fruit of the Spirit, if you like.

Now, just let me take a little liberty for a second. And again, I wasn't going to say this.

But some of us, well, certainly I have, have been in the Western General and the Royal Infirmary and several other hospitals. And we've had loads of MRIs, loads of CT scans. And when you're strapped on that slide, and you're ready to go into the tube, the nurse radiographer pops her head in.

And she puts a cannula in your arm. And in that cannula goes some dye or some contrast. And the reason they do that is so that they can very, very clearly see the difference, the contrast between the types of tissues that they're imaging within you.

[28:15] And I don't care to number how many MRIs and CT scans, unfortunately, I've had to have. But every time they put it in, and the time that they don't put it in, well, guess what?

They pull you back out, and they put it in, and they put you back in. Because they can't tell the difference between the things that they're looking at. Well, let me tell you this. Paul, in a sense, uses a contrast.

Because these things are in stark difference to each other. The fruit of the Spirit is just as clear and as definite as the image on that scan when it comes out at the other end.

Now, as we get into this, notice that the word that we are going to look at here is the fruit of the Spirit. Not the fruits. Quite often we get that wrong. And we think about the fruits of the Spirit. Well, it is not the fruit, the fruits of the Spirit.

It is singular. It is the fruit of the Spirit. And you think maybe I'm getting a bit technical, and I know that your attention will be waning ever so slightly. But I think it's important because it is this. It is singular.

[29:15] It is a whole. It is the unity of what we are looking at. The Spirit of God produces one integrated character. In balance.

In our lives. And we see them. There's nine here. We'll just look at them very quickly because I know that time is almost gone. Love, joy, peace. Quite often when we think about these, we think of these qualities.

And we might think of them as God word in a sense, right? All of the character qualities are affected across our whole life where the Spirit is leading us. But these ones often we think of God word.

It is a selfless, unconditional commitment to care deeply for others as we reflect God's love, God's perfect love in our lives.

Equally as joy is this deep, enduring sense of gladness and contentment. And if you were upstairs two weeks ago and I could hardly speak, you'll remember that we talked about this joy, this happiness that we long for.

[30:17] But this joy comes from trusting God. And then peace is this inner rest and assurance from trusting God despite our circumstances.

It's not the peace that we're given at salvation. It is the peace that we experience in our lives as we go through difficult circumstances. We then come on to the next three, which are patience and kindness and goodness.

And again, I think these have just come out of the ESV, so you might have a slight different order in NIV before you. But these are, quite often we think of these as relational, as how we deal with each other.

And when we think about patience, it's this ability to deal with, endure difficult situations and delays without frustrations or anger towards one another.

When we think about kindness, it's the gentle disposition. It's shown true, genuine care and compassion through our thoughtful words and generous actions.

[31:19] And then we think about goodness. And it's just that, this ongoing, active, constantly generosity for the benefit of others. And then lastly, we've got these last three of faithfulness and gentleness and of self-control.

And if the first three are Godward and the next three are manward, then the last three are inward. And faithfulness is just that, is that reliability, is that trustworthiness, is that loyalty that the Spirit of God produces in us.

Gentleness, or quite often we might see it as weakness. And we see that in the life of the Lord Jesus. And when we think of gentleness, as I say, we think of that word meekness.

It's interesting. Moses is called the meekest man. But Jesus demonstrates completely just that strength under control. And that is what gentleness is.

And then lastly, self-control. It is the Spirit empowering us to have mastery over every desire, every impulse, every appetite, every longing.

[32:27] You know, notice just how different this list is from the world's version of goodness. You know, the fruit that the Spirit produces is not a result of our personality. It's not a result of our upbringing.

And it's not a result of the training that we've had, or discipline, or our temperament. It is the supernatural, if I'm allowed to use that word, it is the supernatural imprint of God's own character in our lives.

And here's the next part of the verse. It says this. Against which? Against such things there is no law. There's no law that can condemn these qualities, nor can the law produce some, if we're honest.

It's only the Spirit that brings this to life. And then Paul comes on to the bit that was just mentioned a little minute ago there. And it is this. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Now, I don't want to lose you right at the end here, but this is a little bit technical. And if I can just sum it up, there was a Scottish Christian from a few years ago called John Ritchie. Some people might know him.

[33:32] And he has a fairly lengthy section of this, which I find incredibly helpful. But I've kind of summarised it in this. And it says this. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have already put their old sinful nature to death with its desires.

They agree with God's judgment on the flesh, shown in the cross and accepted by faith. Not through long efforts of self-denial. The experience may look different from person to person, but the truth is the same for everyone.

As we grow in grace, know God more and trust ourselves less, this reality, the reality of this will show more clearly in our words and our actions.

But it is present from the start in all who are Christ's. You know, at conversion or at salvation, at the point that we became a Christian, the authority of the flesh was broken.

You know, the flesh remains present, as we all sadly are aware. But it is not dominant. It has been sentenced. It has been dethroned. It's been denied its authority in our lives.

[34:41] And yet, even though that is true on the day that we were saved, the power was removed from the flesh. Paul writes elsewhere, and it's a slightly different context, but Paul writes elsewhere that we have, we've got to take up our cross daily.

You know, rejecting these old desires and choosing the Spirit's way. But the point that Paul is making here is more of an identity statement about who we are. We are people who are not under the control of the flesh.

So Paul concludes, he says this, if we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. And it's another beautiful image. You know, it's not running ahead of the Spirit. It's not lagging behind the Spirit.

It is keeping in rhythm with Him, step by step. You know, as the Spirit, and I'm going to come back to those four words I was thinking about, whether it's control or constrain or guide or govern.

But the Spirit convicts and guides and teaches us. And we must be attentive. You know, walking in step means that it should shape our habits, what we spend with our time, our relationships, our desires, around where we go, etc.

[35:49] Because we know that He is with us. And then finally, Paul writes, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

You know, the sad part is this, that even spiritual people can slip into fleshly attitudes. Pride, compassion, sorry, comparison, self-importance.

They're all subtle forms of the flesh just rearing its head. And yet, if we truly walk by the Spirit, the Spirit produces humility.

It produces unity. It produces mutual encouragement. And that warning that Paul puts right at the end there should not be the pattern amongst us that we become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Right back to where we probably started with the verse, for you were called to freedom. Now, and I know that time has gone, but let me just say this. How does this really work in principle?

[36:56] You know, have we become, as Christians, have we become desensitized? Is our life so busy and so distracted that we cannot hear the Spirit speak in our lives?

Have we become so accustomed to sin and the sinful ways of the flesh and the world that we do not have that contrast between what is sinful and what is, what should be our life?

Led by the Spirit and the character or the fruit that the Spirit produces. You know, our passage today is one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of what it means to actually live as a Christian in the world.

You know, Paul tells us this. We've been called to freedom. Not to law keeping or lawlessness or license, as we might think. Paul tells us this, that we are involved in a battle.

It's not a passive life. You're not going to float into this unless you take action. He tells us this, that we are only empowered by the Spirit to lead this life.

[38:02] We cannot do it on our own strength. Paul tells us this as well. We are to bear the fruit of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh. And Paul finishes lastly by saying this.

We are to keep in step with the Spirit, not to follow our own impulses. This passage that we've thought about today is not a list of commands to keep, but it is a life to embrace.

It's not a burden. Some of us think it's a burden. It's not a burden. It is a blessing. It's not by human achievement either. It is the work of the Spirit. You know, the Gospel doesn't merely free us from sin, but it frees us for life in the Spirit.

It frees us to love. It frees us to joy. It frees us into a life that actually works. And the life where the character of Christ shines through us.

That's the point we want you to get to this morning, isn't it? Well, may we, by the grace of God, walk in the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit, step by step, day by day, until Christ is formed in us.

[39:12] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning, and we thank you for this time that we have been able just to spend in this passage. Our Father, we thank you for every true believer that we are indwelt by your Holy Spirit.

And our Father, we are so thankful for that this morning. For as we could not save ourselves by our own merit or our own works or our own actions, our Father, we realize this morning, just as we've spent time in this passage, that we cannot live the Christian life by our own efforts either.

And so, our Father, we pray that as we meditate and think on what we have spoken this morning, our Father, that you would grant us the strength and the wisdom and the submission and the humility just to come and to submit ourselves to the Spirit's leading.

Our Father, if there is anything this morning that I have said that is not of value, our Father, we just ask that it might be cast aside. And yet, our Father, we just pray that your word would speak to us and that your Spirit would enable us to live this life.

And so, our Father, we commit ourselves to you for your blessing. For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.