

## SOARING FOR CHRIST

**Galatians 5:13-26 (TLB)** <sup>13</sup> For, dear brothers, you have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other. <sup>14</sup> For the whole Law can be summed up in this one command: "Love others as you love yourself." <sup>15</sup> But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other. <sup>16</sup> I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions. He will tell you where to go and what to do, and then you won't always be doing the wrong things your evil nature wants you to. <sup>17</sup> For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. <sup>18</sup> When you are guided by the Holy Spirit, you need no longer force yourself to obey Jewish laws. <sup>19</sup> But when you follow your own wrong inclinations, your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, spiritism (that is, encouraging the activity of demons), hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group—and there will be wrong doctrine, <sup>21</sup> envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control; and here there is no conflict with Jewish laws. <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ have nailed their natural evil desires to his cross and crucified them there. <sup>25</sup> If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. <sup>26</sup> Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings.

Jesus fulfilled the entire law of the Old Testament. He never once sinned. The perfect righteousness of Jesus has been placed inside of every believer in Jesus Christ. We no longer have the law screaming at us, putting us locked up in prison. Jesus fulfilled the entire law. The Bible says, "*He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit*" ([Romans 8:4](#) NLT). We have been set free from the bondage of the law. Jesus set us free. God's Holy Spirit now resides in every believer and the Holy Spirit frees us, not to do wrong, but has freed us to love and serve each other. We show our love for God by the way we love each other and serve one another. Yes, in Christ we have been set free and it is the Holy Spirit working inside of us that gives us that sense of freedom and the power to live a life that pleases God. With the burden of the law off of us, we are free to soar.

The Bible says, Isaiah **40:31 (ESV)** “<sup>31</sup>but they who wait [hope, trust] for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah was lifted up into the Lord’s Presence, into the very Throne Room of God. That experience in the Lord’s Presence changed him and he knew deep in his heart, soul, and mind God’s transforming power. Instead of being earth bound, we can fly high and achieve great things for God and all by the power of God’s Presence lifting you up, higher and higher. Yes, He will lift you up. It takes humility on our part and God’s part is to lift you up, pick you up so you can accomplish great things for God, free to love and serve each other, no longer held back in bondage to the law, but free to soar in Christ.

Several years ago, I took six hundred pictures when my son Taylor flew his first solo flight in college. I had tears in my eyes when he taxied all by himself and then up up up in the air he went. As he was ascending, it hit me that this is the anniversary of my father’s death. With tears coming out of my eyes I knew my Dad would be so proud and pleased with Taylor soaring in the air.

Friends there is a bird that cannot fly, a flightless bird called an emu. They can run up to thirty miles an hour but cannot fly at all. They are earthbound. I have walked into churches that feel as if the glory of the Lord has left the temple. God’s Holy Presence is conspicuous by its absence. There is a lot of activity, like a bunch of emus running around. The people are running all around the place doing good, working themselves into a tither, thinking they are pleasing God, but God is most displeased because God never intended for us to work ourselves into an early grave. When we find ourselves completely depleted it is a warning sign from God. God is saying, please quit doing your work in the flesh and do your serving in the all sustaining power of the Presence of God, namely the Holy Spirit. My son could have taxied all over the airport and stayed earthbound. But the time came for him to soar, and that he did.

Friends, we are putting a heavy emphasis in this church on discipleship. We are doing this so all of us can soar like an eagle. My son never could have flown had he not been instructed. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ does not mean we want you to do more. It does mean we are open to do actual ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. It takes much less effort on our part and God's strength picks you up, raises you up so you are free as a bird, an eagle, to soar. This is only accomplished by God's Presence actively working inside of you.

Luther tells us we do not experience the Presence of God apart from the Word of God. All of God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit, giving us fuel to soar and no longer be earthbound, emu Christians living in the flesh, our old sinful nature. I see the decline of the church in America due to this. People are ignoring God and are no longer hungry for His presence in their lives. They are content being emus when God has so much more in store for us. Yes, there are ways the ministry of any and every church can improve. In discipleship, we are asking everyone to make a radical decision to follow and obey Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit, God's Presence, making us free to serve God in ways that causes the Kingdom of God to grow all around us. It is not trying to work harder for God. It is letting go and surrendering everything over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

When I was five years of age my parents came to Christ and it was fun to see. The Holy Spirit got ahold of them so wonderfully at age 5 I could see the power of God working in their lives. My parents were used by God to touch people's lives for Christ. My father could soar in ways that still amazes me. On the other hand, God's Presence does change us inwardly, but we can choose to neglect God's Presence, ignore God's Presence, quench God's fire in us, grieve God's Spirit in us and resort to living in our old dirty rotten sinful nature. We cave into our old sinful nature and does it wreak havoc. Yes, we are able to squelch the power of God's Presence in our lives.

In my life, I feel like God is doing another spring cleaning. What I sense inwardly is the Holy Spirit revealing to me quietly, peacefully, lovingly where I have made terrible mistakes, living out the rottenness of my sinful nature, choosing to live in the flesh and not in the Spirit. I could give you several examples of this but suffice it to say, it is my family that has paid the price. I can see now what I did not see or realize then. I cannot go back and make up for it, but I can move forward in God's strength, in God's Presence and I am freed up on the inside to let go of that awful sinful human nature and walk daily in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I recently read an article that deeply affected me. The crux of it is we can cave into the power of our old sinful nature and not realize it and speak words out of anger thinking we are doing the right thing for God. I quote, "But there is a right way and a wrong way to do it, [speaking of calling out sin], a right spirit and a wrong spirit. God forbid that we use spiritual jargon and Christianese to justify our lack of self-control. This is especially important for ministers of the gospel. How dare we attribute to the Spirit our fleshly behavior. **2 Timothy 2:24-25 (NLT2)** <sup>24</sup> *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.* <sup>25</sup> *Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth.* To be contentious and quarrelsome is to be dominated by the flesh. And the flesh will only produce more flesh. Count on it. Ouch.

1. **Let us continually ask ourselves before we speak, "Am I operating of the Spirit, my new nature, or out of my old sinful nature?" James 1:19-20 (NLT2)** <sup>19</sup> Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. <sup>20</sup> Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. Am I speaking out of a heart filled with love or am I just venting my own pent-up anger? One sentence spoken in the flesh can do more harm than we can imagine, setting an entire forest of fire. 2. **The Holy Spirit floods our hearts with God's love, so we operate out of love.**

Verse <sup>15</sup> But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other. **3. “Am I operating out of a critical spirit or am I operating out of the Holy Spirit.”** Most of us have been taught to think critically and not just accept what a person says at face value. We are trained to see errors as a person speaks to us. Extraverts enjoy pointing out these errors. Yes, with the help of God’s Presence in our lives we can speak the truth in love. Not that long ago someone came into my office and spoke of the way I had offended this particular person. I listened intently to every word and let me tell you why. This person entered my office with an attitude of love and respect toward me. They did not come in with a critical attitude thinking themselves far superior to me. The person was motivated by God’s love. The relationship was restored. How can you turn down love like that? A critical spirit tears one down. **4. A loving spirit builds a person up even when correcting.** We all need correcting from time to time. It is learning how to do it in the Spirit and not the flesh.

When I watch the news most of what I hear are criticisms of what someone else thinks. It’s like these news stories are out to destroy people. This is harmful to our nation. Even politicians speak language that if people take seriously can do great harm, even physical harm such as someone trying to kill Supreme Justice Brett Kavanaugh. A fire can be started and go undetected. What we say has consequences. For the remainder of my time in the ministry I hope to never let my old sinful human nature rule.

Listen to how Paul describes the old nature inside of us, when we live in the flesh and not the Spirit. <sup>16</sup> *I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit’s instructions. He will tell you where to go and what to do, and then you won’t always be doing the wrong things your evil nature wants you to.* <sup>17</sup> *For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures.* <sup>18</sup> *When*

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I conclude this sermon with these thoughts. **5. In prayer please ask the Lord Jesus to show you where you have been walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit.** **6. If your words or actions have offended someone, please go to that person, prayerfully, in the love of God, and ask for their forgiveness.** **7. If you have been offended, please seek the Lord and ask God to give to you the freedom in the Spirit to forgive that person and let go of that long held grudge.**

Next week we will speak only of walking in the Spirit and what the Presence of God inside of us produces, namely the fruit of the Spirit. This is how we soar for the sake of Jesus. Amen and Amen.