

## Galatians 5

- As we exit Chapter 4 and enter Chapter 5, Paul has effectively argued that Law is not the means to our salvation
  - In fact, it never accomplished that purpose and it can never do so
    - Using Sarah and Hagar as an allegory, Paul stressed that even the Law itself teaches God justifies through faith alone
    - We ended Chapter 4 last week teaching that we are children of Sarah, children who depend on God's promises
      - Rather than children of Hagar, who seek to be justified through works of flesh
  - So as we enter Chapter 5, Paul is ready to wrap back around to the doctrine of soteriology
    - First, Paul will remind the church that any dependence on the Law instead of grace for righteousness is a no-win proposition
      - One that demands perfect compliance
    - But then Paul will turn in a new direction
  - This new direction is explaining how a Christian lives under grace instead of law
    - Since the Law of Moses is no longer our guide for living, the question becomes how should a Christian follow the Lord?
    - While it's easy to understand how grace saved us from the penalty of sin
    - How does it preserve us from the reality of sin?
      - If the Law doesn't regulate our lives, what does?
- So the outline for tonight in Chapter 5 has three points
  - First, Paul discusses two extreme and incorrect responses to grace
    - On the one hand, we can make the mistake of trying to combine grace and Law

- On the other hand, we can make the opposite mistake of living a licentious lifestyle with no regulation or limits
- Then thirdly, Paul will explain the proper middle ground that all Christians should seek
  - That is living in the grace of God, enjoying the freedom won for us on the cross
  - While always remaining under the control of the Spirit in holiness and self-restraint
- Turning to Chapter 5, Paul opens with a thesis statement to set up the rest of the chapter

**Gal. 5:1** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

- Paul's opening statement sets forth the principle of a Christian's relationship to the Law of Moses
  - There is no stronger statement in all the Bible on this topic
    - Highlight it, underline it, memorize it, and follow it
    - So much burden, misery, heartache and confusion could have been avoided in the history of the church if only more Christians understood this verse
  - First, Paul says it was for our freedom that Christ set us free
    - Christ released us from the obligations of the Mosaic Law so that we might serve Him freely
    - Under the Law, Gods people endured severe restrictions on the ways they could serve the Lord
      - The Law restricted who could serve
      - When they could serve
      - How they could serve
      - And even the audience they could reach
  - But now Christ has fulfilled all that the Law required, both in His life and in His death

- Jesus fulfilled our obligations under the Law on our behalf, so all that the Law required has been met in Him
  - That's why Christ declared on the cross that it is finished
  - He was referring to His work under the Law
    - The work of keeping Law was finished
    - And the penalties of the Law had been paid
  - Therefore the Law itself was "finished" for those who accept Jesus' accomplishment on their behalf
  - Therefore, we are now free to serve God without concern for what the Law says about who, when and how we may serve
- Paul says Christ came for this very purpose, to set us free from these restrictions
    - Obviously, the first purpose in setting us free from Law was to save us from the penalty of the Law for our sin
      - We now live in freedom from fear of death and the judgment that follows
      - What a difference it makes to serve the Lord without guilt or fear!
      - We serve Christ free from such worries and burdens
    - But secondly, Christ fulfilled the Law so that we would not need to be burdened by trying to do it ourselves, for we could not possibly meet its requirements anyway
      - What a shame it is when we refuse to take advantage of the very freedom Christ has won for us
      - Imagine yourself living as a slave, when the king pledges his entire fortune to win your freedom from your master
        - By His grace, you are set free from your enslavement
      - But then imagine that despite the king's payment, you voluntarily choose to remain in your enslavement
        - You opt to continue suffering under your burdens
        - Burdens the king paid dearly to remove
      - How do you think the king would view your return to slavery?

- Would he be happy?
- Essentially, this is the situation Christians assume when they legalistically mix grace and Law
  - They assume upon themselves a limited form of slavery, thinking they please the Lord by voluntarily adopting restrictions He intended for an entirely different purpose
    - In reality, they throw His gift of freedom in His face, so to speak
    - They refuse to live in the freedom Christ won through His perfect life and sacrificial death
    - They haven't lost salvation, of course, but they are forfeiting the freedom grace provides
  - In his letter to the Colossians, Paul warns the church not to succumb to pressure to re-enter slavery to Law

[Col. 2:18](#) Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

[Col. 2:20](#) If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, [Col. 2:21](#) "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"

- Paul commands us not to allow someone to defraud us of our prize
- The "prize" is a reference to liberty, that is our freedom to live without regard to Law
- Paul says if we have died with Christ to the Law, then why act as if such restrictions still have power over us?
  - Clearly, such a lifestyle is not only unnecessary
  - It is also sin, because it testifies to a lie that Christians must keep the Law
- This is why Paul taught earlier in this letter that we do not have the liberty to place ourselves back under Law in a systematic fashion
  - We may have liberty to enjoy on occasion certain memorials or other rituals taken from the Law

- But we do not have liberty to reimpose a lifestyle of slavery to Law in an attempt to mimic or recreate the Jewish lifestyle
- Doing so is an affront to the work of Christ on the cross
- Instead, Paul gives us a command to keep standing firm and not be subject to a yoke of slavery
  - Paul's command is in the active imperative voice, which means we must continuously make effort to keep this command
    - We must actively protect our freedom, standing unwaveringly in the confidence that we do not need the Law for anything
    - Men will come along from time to time, trying to convince us that slavery to Old Testament rules and regulation is necessary for our righteousness
    - But Paul says we must continuously resist such men and their teaching
    - As James Montgomery Boice said:

**“...Obstinate perseverance in freedom [is] the only proper response to an attempt to bring Christians once more under legalism.”**

- Secondly, Paul says do not be subject...
  - The English phrase “do not be subject” in Greek means to fall into entanglement
  - The sense here is being caught in a trap from which we cannot escape
  - So we cannot allow ourselves to become entrapped by clear argument, twisted use of scripture, debates over meanings of words or an appeal to tradition over the word of God
- Legalism, whether to the Law of Moses or some other set of rules, can sound seductive and become a persuasive trap
  - It is set by those who do not understand our freedom in grace
  - They often have very deep and convoluted arguments, usually based on twisting Hebrew or Greek words, emphasizing history and the Old Testament commands to the Jews

- If we are not prepared to stand firm in the Bible's teaching, we can easily find ourselves taken away by the arguments, leading us to fall into the trap
  - Paul calls the burden and restriction of the Law of Moses a "yoke"
    - We are like that slave voluntarily re-entering slavery even after freedom has been purchased
    - If we are ever fooled into thinking that Law has a place in our Christian walk, we place a yoke of slavery on our necks
  - Remember from our prior studies in Exodus that the Law is a single, indivisible entity
    - We cannot divide the Law into parts, like ceremonial or moral law
    - We cannot divide the ten commandments out from the rest
    - It is all or none, and Paul says we owe it nothing because Christ has met it all
    - So either you wear the entire yoke or you throw it off once and for all
- Having set forth the principle of Christian freedom, Paul now addresses the first error of attempting to unite Christ and Law together in the Christian experience

**[Gal. 5:2](#)** Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

**[Gal. 5:3](#)** And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

**[Gal. 5:4](#)** You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

**[Gal. 5:5](#)** For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

**[Gal. 5:6](#)** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

- Paul gives clear and bold direction to the church (I, Paul, say to you...) in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Judaizers
  - Paul says to receive circumcision means that Christ was of no benefit to you
    - These verses are often a source of some confusion or bad doctrine because we fail to see the nuances of Paul's argument

- But when we examine the text carefully, it comes together properly
- Paul teaches a conditional cause–and–effect relationship
  - The condition is if someone (a man, obviously) receives circumcision
  - Paul’s verb conjugation implies a willing acceptance on the part of the man to receive circumcision along with all that circumcision represents
  - A person who receives circumcision is agreeing with all that the Judaizers were teaching concerning Law
    - He agreed that salvation was by means of the Jewish Law and lifestyle
    - He agreed that the death of Christ was not sufficient to save
  - He was demonstrating that his trust for eternal life resided in the keeping of Law instead of trusting solely in the work of Christ
- So for that person, Paul says Christ is of no benefit
  - If we add anything to the work of Christ, we nullify belief in Christ
    - Many people have tried to “roll their own” formula of salvation
    - They take a little of religion “A” and some of religion “B” and concoct their own recipe for salvation
    - Paul says if you have added Christ to such a recipe, you might as well subtract Christ from your recipe, because He’s of no benefit under such circumstances
  - There is no point in adding Christ to a formula that includes other steps or requirements, because grace doesn’t work that way
    - The Gospel declares we are saved by our trust in Christ alone
    - And if we place our trust in anything else – whether works of Law or other gods or acts of the flesh – then it demonstrates we haven’t placed our trust in Christ
    - Therefore, Christ does nothing for our salvation in such a situation

- So Paul says adding circumcision to Christ effectively denies Christ in the process
  - Just as when the Catholic Church teaches that salvation is a combination of faith in Christ plus doing penance, it denies Christ
  - Just as when the Mormons teach that salvation is a combination of Christ plus good works and temple observances, they deny Christ
  - Just as when so-called Messianic Christian movements require adherence to the Mosaic Law as a condition of righteousness, they deny that Christ is sufficient to bring us righteousness
- And to emphasize his point, Paul repeats himself in v.3
  - He says that if someone receives circumcision, they show they place their trust in the Law to obtain righteousness
    - Such a person is expecting to be granted eternal life on the basis of their works under the Law, beginning with taking circumcision
    - Paul says if you choose that route, you had better be prepared to keep the entire Law and to do so perfectly forever
  - Because there is no credit to be gained for partial compliance with the Law of Moses
    - God designed His Law to be an all-or-nothing standard for good reason
    - He wanted to demonstrate to us that we are unrighteous and in need of grace
    - So we get no benefit for keeping even 99% of it
      - To break one Law, James says, is equal to violating all the Law
      - So the Law's standard is unforgiving and impossible
  - Therefore, Paul says the one who receives circumcision is obligated to keep all the Law since they are placing their trust in it for righteousness
    - And of course, this is an impossible standard, which God designed to be futile

- Therefore, every man or woman who places his trust in Law will be disappointed in the end
- They will find that neither their justification nor their sanctification will have been achieved by that method
- Certainly, trusting the Law for salvation reveals the absence of saving faith in a person's heart, but a believer relying on the Law for sanctification is equally wrong
  - Christians who have been deceived into thinking that following some or all of the Mosaic Law will achieve greater holiness have also missed the point of the Law
    - God is not pleased with partial obedience
    - Even if a Christian should keep 612 of the 613 Laws of the Old Testament Law, they would still have failed to please the Lord
      - Because even just one violation of the Law leaves us guilty of all the Law
      - Technically, we are just as sinful had we failed to keep all the Law
  - But partial obedience to the Law is the only thing possible, as God has intended
    - The temple and Jewish priesthood have been destroyed
    - So it is literally impossible to accomplish most of the Law's requirements
    - Therefore, if we place our trust in the Law for our sanctification, we will always be frustrated
    - For the same reason Jews of today are frustrated in their attempts to seek justification by Law
  - The writer of Hebrews tells us God took away the ability of men to keep the Law so that we would understand He had provided a better way

**[Heb. 8:13](#) When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.**

- To sum up, Paul says in v.4 that anyone who takes circumcision in the belief it will make him more righteous has been severed from Christ and fallen from grace
  - Because they have placed their trust in the Law, they benefit none at all from knowing of Christ and the Gospel
    - Some have read these words and concluded Paul was describing a believer losing his salvation
    - But the context of Paul's argument (to say nothing of the rest of the New Testament) precludes that interpretation
    - Paul is speaking of someone who has never come to faith in the first place
  - Look back to the description in v.2 where Paul said that taking circumcision means you have not benefitted from Christ
    - Christ doesn't provide benefit when combined with other sources of righteousness
      - It's like adding a useless ingredient in any recipe
      - You might as well leave the ingredient out
    - So Paul said such a combination is pointless, and demonstrates the person is still relying on works rather than on faith alone
  - Therefore, Paul says that when we depend on something other than Christ, we are forfeiting any benefit from Christ
    - We are severed from Christ in the sense that we gain no benefit from adding Him to our recipe of salvation
    - We have fallen from grace in the sense that we have come up short of accepting God's grace on its own terms
      - Like someone who leaves his fiancé at the altar
      - They got close to a lasting relationship, but in the end they came up short of a true marriage
  - The writer of Hebrews speaks in similar terms about someone who fails to embrace the Gospel in faith

**Heb. 4:1** Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

[Heb. 4:2](#) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

- Or later he says

[Heb. 12:15](#) See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

- The writer says that some may “come short” of the grace of God, which is similar to the phrase Paul uses here in Galatians
  - Coming short of something implies not fully receiving or accepting it
  - They hear the message, perhaps joining themselves for a time, but eventually something reveals their false heart
  - Like when the Galatians willingly receive circumcision and accept the teaching that Law was a necessary part of the Christian experience
    - They are coming up short of grace
- In contrast to falling from grace, true Christians depend upon faith exclusively, Paul says
  - In vs.5-6, Paul says we (the Christians) are those who by the Spirit are content to wait for the righteousness to come, through the faith we have been given
    - We too desire righteousness
    - But we don't seek to obtain it through the works of our flesh by following a Law we know we cannot keep in the first place
    - Instead, we hope for righteousness, trusting it will be ours one day in the future, by God's grace through our faith
  - We understand that our faith will bring us righteousness in a future day of God's choosing
    - We will receive a glorified body by His power
    - And the moment of our glorification will be our moment of true righteousness

- And that in the meantime, we depend on the Spirit to lead us toward sanctification
  - We don't fool ourselves concerning our ability to become righteous through our works
  - We know we continue to fall short of God's glory each day
  - Yet each day we move closer to Christ, knowing we are promised better things in the future
- Simply put, nothing a Christian accomplishes by flesh moves us a step closer to our ultimate righteousness
  - It is not as though our righteousness is a tank becoming a little fuller each day by our works
    - In reality, it is a story of two tanks
      - Our spirit tank is already filled by Christ's righteousness
      - While our flesh tank remains as bankrupt as ever
    - So we are not to waste time trying to fill our flesh tank with righteousness
    - Because we simply cannot fill it enough to please God
    - And in the end, God will replace it
  - So keeping Law does nothing to bring us closer to sanctification
    - Whether we are circumcised or not
    - Whether we are abstaining from certain foods or not
    - Whether we are observing certain festivals, days of rest or whatever
    - These things are not our path to righteousness
      - Neither for justification nor for sanctification
  - The recipe for sanctification must be the same as for justification
    - It comes by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ
    - As Paul says, faith working through love

- This is the recipe for godliness and pleasing God
- This is the full sense of freedom and liberty
  - God has already done the work of righteousness
    - He has already granted us a spirit of righteousness
    - And one day in the future, He will grant us a body of righteousness
    - So we are freed to serve Him without concern for recovering from our sin or achieving righteousness
    - Those things are settled, so now we just serve Him freely
      - All our worries for righteousness have been settled at the cross
    - So why then remain preoccupied with seeking righteousness by Law or any other means apart from faith alone?
  - This church knew these things at one point in the past, when Paul taught them originally, but they have since slipped back

[Gal. 5:7](#) You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

[Gal. 5:8](#) This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

[Gal. 5:9](#) A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

[Gal. 5:10](#) I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

[Gal. 5:11](#) But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

[Gal. 5:12](#) I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

- This church was running well, Paul says, but someone hindered them from obeying the truth
  - The church had been running well
    - Like a foot race, our spiritual life is a test of endurance requiring effort and leading to reward if we persevere
    - And then Paul extends the metaphor by asking who hindered them?
    - The Greek word for hinder means to impede, as in to block the path of a runner

- So Paul asks the church rhetorically, who is standing in your path on the way to the finishing line?
  - To drive the knife even deeper, Paul says they weren't being persuaded by the Lord, Who called them into faith
  - Instead, this teaching was the product of a sinful motive
  - Like leaven in a lump of dough, the church was introduced to false teaching, which was polluting the entire body
- And once again, the obvious answer to the question of "who" was the Judaizers
  - These men were disturbing the church, Paul says, and they will bear God's judgment for their false teaching
  - They were the ones placing stumbling blocks in front of the Church
  - Leading them away from the truth and into diversions that profit them nothing
  - Nevertheless, Paul says he has better hope for them that they might recover from these deceptions
- To help that process along, Paul takes specific aim at one of the Judaizers' lies
  - Specifically, in vs.11-12 Paul denounces an accusation these men made against Paul himself
    - They claimed Paul had been preaching circumcision and keeping the Law to the Jews
    - But then when Paul came to Gentiles, he changed his story, thereby withholding the true Gospel
      - Of course, then the Judaizers claimed to be setting the record straight
    - This was a lie, but it was a convincing lie to Gentiles who didn't respect Paul's authority
  - Paul blows holes in their logic
    - He says if it were true he were preaching to Jews that circumcision and law were required for salvation, then why did Jews still persecute Paul?

- The main objection the Jews had to the message of the Gospel was that salvation could be on the basis of faith and not by the Law of Moses
- They objected to Paul's claims that salvation was available to Gentiles without circumcision or Law
- Paul says this truth was a stumbling block for the Jewish people, leading them to reject the Gospel altogether
- But if Paul was, in fact, preaching that circumcision and Law were required, then certainly there would be no stumbling block
  - And then the Jews would have embraced the Gospel
  - And they certainly wouldn't have persecuted Paul
  - In other words, the Judaizers' accusation didn't add up
- And then in a rare display of strong language, Paul says he wished the men who advocate circumcision would mutilate themselves
  - What Paul says in the original Greek is quite graphic
  - Paul is saying that if these men believe a little cut to their foreskin made them more holy, then they should go all the way and cut the rest off too
  - If a little cut is good, then more would be better, according to the logic of their teaching
  - Do we need a more strongly worded denunciation of any attempt to impose Jewish law or custom on the Christian?
    - I think not
- With that parting comment, Paul puts to rest his attack against the Judaizers and the error of trying to combine both grace and Law into a single plan of salvation
  - Now he moves to the opposite mistake Christians might make with regard to Law

[Gal. 5:13](#) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

[Gal. 5:14](#) For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

[Gal. 5:15](#) But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

- The second error is the opposite problem of living as we have no restrictions on our behavior at all
  - What led Paul to go down this line of attack?
    - Perhaps he was concerned that his strong arguments against following the Jewish Law would lead Christians to adopt antinomianism
    - Antinomianism is a false doctrine that see Christians as living under no restrictions of law whatsoever
    - It becomes an opportunity to engage in sin thinking that we have liberty to do anything we wish
  - Or perhaps Paul was merely preempting the Judaizers from accusing him of teaching antinomianism
    - Perhaps the Judaizers would claim Paul was teaching Christians to live lawlessly
    - They could say that if the Mosaic Law (including the Ten Commandments) were null and void as Paul taught, then he would be inviting all manner of sin
  - Regardless of his motivation, Paul makes a clear statement against Christians abusing freedom
    - Paul says we cannot allow our freedom to become an opportunity for the flesh to lead us into sin
    - We have freedom to enjoy many activities, to associate with any person, to spend our time and money in many ways
    - We have freedom to eat and drink anything, including eating pork, shellfish and drinking alcohol
  - But our freedoms can become opportunities for us to pursue sin as well

- We can stimulate lust for the wrong things, including eating or drinking too much
  - We can act in ways that offend others, including causing others to stumble by exercising our freedom carelessly
  - We can promote lust in others, we can promote greed or envy in others
  - In all cases, we are allowing the flesh to take over and drive us away from the Spirit's influence
- Rather than provoking lust, we must consider everything we do from a perspective of love for a brother or sister
    - We are to regard the needs of everyone else as equal to our own, and we live in such a way that we concern ourselves with how to love others
      - Guided by the Spirit in us, we seek to make godly and holy choices in the face of an infinite number of situations
      - Rather than acting without restraint, we act with great sensitivity to the needs and concerns of others in love for all
      - This standard is the furthest thing possible from antinomianism
      - It is self-restraint under the leading and conviction of the Spirit
    - This standard will take us far beyond anything the Mosaic Law established
      - The Law couldn't mandate or even prescribe love
      - Yet Jesus said that everything the Law required is fulfilled by loving our neighbors as we love ourself
      - Clearly, if Jesus commanded us to the standard of love, yet the Law did not promote love, then Jesus was appealing to a better way than Law
        - And that way is by the Spirit through faith
    - Paul says if we attempt to live without love or self-restraint, we will devour one another, Paul says
      - Our liberty will become excuse to take what we want, to have what we want, and to live as we want – and all to the detriment of everyone else

- We will bite each other in the sense of injuring each other
- And we will consume one another in the sense that all fellowship will be destroyed and the body of Christ will fall apart at the seams
- We won't be able to stand being around one another
- So Paul has explained that living under the Law is wrong and living without the Law is wrong, so how are we to live?
  - The answer, as we can already see, is to live by faith through the Spirit's work in us

[Gal. 5:16](#) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

[Gal. 5:17](#) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

[Gal. 5:18](#) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

- Paul's words in this passage are a very short version of his teaching in Romans 7-8
- He uses the metaphor of "walking" in the Spirit in the same way John does in his letters...living under the control of the Spirit
- As long as we live in this sinful body, we will know and experience the draw of our flesh into sinful behaviors
- But at the same time, we have the Spirit living in us telling us those desires are wrong and calling us to better choices
- Every Christian knows both of these driving forces
  - Countless times a day we experience the flesh tempting us to do something that isn't in keeping with love
  - From the simplest things like our laziness of throwing litter on the ground, leaving the toilet seat up, or failing to yield to another driver
  - To more significant things like breaking laws, cheating customers, lying to coworkers, or gossiping and slandering others
  - To the serious sins of sexual immorality, violence and idolatry in various forms

- But at the same time, we know the voice of the Shepherd, who calls us by His Spirit to move away from these things even as we experience the draw of the flesh
  - When we first contemplate dropping that piece of litter or breaking that law or spreading that false word, it is then we also encountered an alternative thought
  - We felt an uneasiness and perhaps hesitated to think about our course of action in the moment
  - That's the moment when you are hearing from the Spirit
  - We can't say we don't hear the Lord talking to us, because we all know that moment
- Paul says the Spirit and flesh are always opposed to one another
  - Which means those split second moments of indecision or contemplation are the evidence of two forces pulling us in different directions (Romans 7)
    - The sinful plan of action formed in your flesh, and it wants to move forward
    - But then immediately a different thought came to mind
    - And in that moment, you're making a decision about who to listen to
      - Example: As you leave the dish on the counter, you remember that it would be better to put it in the dishwasher
    - Either you go with the first thought or you move with the Spirit's influence
    - One way shows love for yourself and the other shows love for God and others
    - One is sin, one is righteousness
  - We've all been there, but depending on how you've chosen to respond in the past, you may find one voice growing more persuasive over time while the other fades
    - If you have made a habit of listening to the flesh, then you will begin to deaden your sensitivity to the Spirit

- So that when you face one of those split second decision moments, your hesitation will be even shorter
- Your decision won't seem as difficult
- Your past pattern of giving in to the flesh will make your choice almost reflexive
  - Without any thought, you go with the familiar choice
  - Making sin a lifestyle
- The Spirit never goes silent, but we can become practiced at ignoring Him – to our own destruction
  - On the other hand, we can become practiced at listening to the Spirit and disciplining the flesh
  - We take every opportunity to say yes to the Spirit and deny our flesh its desires
  - At the first sign of conflict between these two voices, we move quickly and with determination to follow the Spirit
- Billy Graham told a story to illustrate the competition between the flesh and Spirit

**"An Eskimo fisherman came to town every Saturday afternoon. He always brought his two dogs with him. One was white and the other was black. He had taught them to fight on command. Every Saturday afternoon in the town square the people would gather and these two dogs would fight and the fisherman would take bets. On one Saturday, the black dog would win; another Saturday the white dog would win – but the fisherman always won! His friends began to ask him how he did it. He said, "I starve one and feed the other. The one I feed always wins because he is stronger."**