

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 10/11/92 PM
Galatians 5:19-21 "The Works of the Flesh"

Intro: Q: What is our enemy in the Christian life?

Illust: At the close of an important speech to Congress on Jan 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt shared his vision of the kind of world he wanted to see after the war was over. He envisioned 4 basic freedoms enjoyed by all people: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. To some degree, these freedoms have been achieved to some degree. (Wiersbe, 716)

But our world still needs another freedom. Warren Wiersbe calls it a fifth freedom. Man needs to be free from himself and the tyranny of his sinful nature.

Only Jesus Christ offers that kind of freedom. Only those who are in Christ have the indwelling potential for victory over the enemy of sin.

Last week we began a new series. Our aim is to discover what real, genuine Christianity is all about. It of course is a matter of the heart.

Galatians 5:22-23

"Fruit Inspection 101"

#1 Introduction--An Overview of Galatians 5

#2 The Works of the Flesh (5:16-21)

#3 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Love, Joy, Peace (5:22)

#4 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with Others: Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness (5:22)

#5 The Fruit of the Spirit in Ourselves: Faith, Meekness, Self-Control (5:23)

#6 Walking in the Spirit (5:24-26)

Last week, we laid the foundation for our study with an overview of the text:

I. The Categories (16)

A. Flesh

B. Spirit

II. The Conflict (17-18)

III. The Contrast (19-26)

A. The Works of the Flesh (19-21)

B. The Fruit of the Spirit (22-23)

Tonight we want to probe the nature of this conflict. Listen. Before we can enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, we must identify and put to death the enemy.

Q: What is the real enemy of successful Christian living? What needs to go?

A: Gal 5:19 "the works of the flesh"

You may be surprised what the works of the flesh are!

Proposition: In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul reveals 4 types of sins that must go.

I. Repulsive Sins (19)

A. Adultery

B. Fornication

- C. Uncleaness
- D. Lasciviousness
- II. Religious Sins (20)
 - A. Idolatry
 - B. Sorcery
- III. Relationship Sins (20-21)
 - A. Hatred
 - B. Strife
 - C. Jealousy
 - D. Wrath
 - E. Factions
 - F. Seditions
 - G. Hersies
 - H. Envyings
 - I. Murders
- IV. Reckless Sins (21)
 - A. Drunkenness
 - B. Revelings
 - C. And the Like...
- The Caution (21)

V 19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest..."

Quote: Vance Havner has said, "Too many Christians live their Christian lives inside their heads; it never gets out through hands and feet and lips."

Last week we scanned the background of Galatians. It's a book that addresses the problem of legalism. It's a book that addresses the importance of the Holy Spirit.

Key: When the Holy Spirit controls a person's life, certain things must evacuate. What things?

"the works of the flesh"--those activities and attitudes generated by the flesh

Q: How can I know if I am being controlled by the flesh or the Spirit?

--If I am controlled by the flesh, the works of the flesh (vv 19-21)...

--If I am controlled by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit (vv 22-24)

"manifested"--open, manifest, well known

Illust: People watch us...

Q: What are the works of the flesh?

A: Paul's list of vices totals 17, although 2 are not in oldest greek manuscripts (adultery, murders). These seem to be grouped into 4 types of sins, 4 categories.

I. Repulsive Sins (19)

Q: What are repulsive sins?

There are 4 listed in v 4. They are all sexual sins, blatant perversion of the gift of sex that God designed for mankind to enjoy in the loving bounds of marital commitment.

Here are the sins: Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness. These are all works of the flesh.

Key: You need to know that the sexual life of the Graeco-Roman world in which Paul lived was a lawless chaos.

Quote: One has said of that age, "It was an age when shame seems to have vanished from the earth." (see Barclay, 24)

Quote: Demonsthenes wrote of the greek practice, "We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day to day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes." (Barclay)

The upper level of Roman society was largely promiscuous. And in all levels, homosexuality was rampant.

It was against this bleak, immoral background that the church existed. It has been said that Christianity introduced chastity as a completely new virtue into the pagan world. That wasn't easy. It wasn't popular then for a Christian to practice sexual purity. In fact, prostitution was even incorporated into Roman religion! Religion and sexual immorality went hand in hand.

So you can appreciate Paul's bluntness. He hit the nail on the head with the Christians at Galatia. "These things are rampant in the world, but they have no place in the lives of Christians. They're of the flesh."

What things?

A. Adultery

= violation of marriage covenant

B. Fornication

= "pornea"; a general word for immoral sex outside of marriage

Pornea is love which is bought and sold, which is not love at all. Pornea occurs when a person buys sex, whether from a prostitute, or from a store in the form of pornographic literature, or in a sexually perverted novel.

C. Uncleaness

= moral impurity in thought, word, or deed

The basic greek word means "physical and material dirt." Here it refers to moral dirt, things which are repulsive. General moral impurity.

D. Lasciviousness

There seems to be a downward progression. Fornication refers to specific sexual infidelity. Uncleaness refers to general moral corruption. Lasciviousness is the climax of sexual evil. This word indicates a love of sin that is so reckless and so audacious that a person no longer cares what God thinks or what man thinks about his actions. That's lasciviousness.

When people flaunt on TV screens, parading their sexual lewdness, that's lasciviousness. When people live in open, sexual sin, and care less what people think, that's lasciviousness.

Lasciviousness is sexual sin that has no shame. It describes a person who is at the mercy of his or her unbridled passions and fantasies.

Illust:

Challenge: Obviously, repulsive sins have to go.

Q: Do you have a handle on sexual convictions? Teens, have you committed yourself to God's standards of purity?

Illust:

II. Religious Sins (20)

There are two.

A. Idolatry

= when a person worships something created instead of the Creator

Quote: Barclay, "A man's god may rightly be said to be that to which he dedicates his time, his substance, and his talents." (34)

A status symbol can be an idol. Lots of Christians are controlled by the status symbols. A house in a certain section of town. A piece of furniture. A car.

Whenever a thing usurps the place that belongs to God, we have committed idolatry.

My Opinion: American worships the god of Materialism.

Illust:

B. Sorcery

= "pharmakeia" = sorcery and witchcraft; the use of medicine, drugs, or spells

In ancient times, the worship of evil powers was accompanied by the use of drugs to create a trance. Hence, the word "sorcery."

These are both "works of the flesh"--Repulsive sins, and Religious sins.

You say, "OK, I can see those are bad. I don't do those things... I'm OK."

Wait a minute.

III. Relationship Sins (20-21)

I find it convicting that the biggest category is this one, the one that has to do with relationships. 9 social sins.

Key: The quickest way to see if a person is controlled by the flesh or the Holy Spirit is to look at his/her relationships with people. Don't look at whether the person is preaching or teaching a SS class, or dropping \$ in the offering, or singing in church. A person can do all these things and be controlled by the flesh.

Look at their relationships. How does he/she relate to people? Do you see Christ in the way he relates to people?

See: Eph 5:18 -- the byproduct of being filled with the Spirit?

Relationships (Eph 5:22-6:9)

Here is the evidence of the control of the flesh...

A. Hatred

= the opposite of agape love; it's bitter prejudice; it's when we put up barriers in our heart and separate ourselves from people.

B. Strife

= the result of hatred; broken relationships; turmoil in the tribe!

I read one commentator who said that no sin more commonly invades the church than this one. And no sin is more destructive of Christian fellowship than this one.

C. Jealousy

= lit. "zeal"; but selfish zeal; self-centered jealousy

Someone has said, "There is no better test of a man than his reaction to the success of someone else." (Barclay, 49)

How do you react when your neighbor gets the new car you've been wanting?

D. Wrath

= result of jealousy; an outburst of temper; an eruption of smoldering passion

Wrath is a blaze of anger which flares into violent words and actions.

Let's stop here for a minute. Sometimes you will hear this counsel, "It's OK to blow up at people. You can't hold it in or you'll hurt yourself. Let it out!"

Listen. It's never alright to blast someone else just so you can clear your chest. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Wrath is a work of the flesh. Granted, we must communicate our feelings, but always under the Spirit's control.

Let me lay it on the table. Sometimes a person will say, "Well I can't control my temper. That's just the way I am. People will just have to learn to accept my outbursts and my uncontrolled temper."

No. That may be the way you are, but that's not the way Christ wants you to be. He wants to move you from exhibiting the "works of the flesh" to radiating the "fruit of the Spirit." For that to happen it starts by you calling your unbridled temper what God calls it--a work of the flesh, sin. And then yielding that sin to the Spirit, and asking Him for help to overcome it.

Illust:

E. Factions

= rivalry; promoting yourself at the expense of others

F. Seditious

= dissension; a standing apart

Note: Some people are at odds with people all the time. Over something. If that's you, ask yourself, "Is the Spirit really controlling my life?"

G. Heralds

= beng "cliquy"; one who generates factions in the church

H. Envyings

= a wrongful desire to possess what belongs to someone else

I. Murders

= the ultimate expression of selfishness; to take another life

Challenge: These characteristics are to have no footing in our lives.

Illust:

IV. Reckless Sins (21)

Two are listed...

A. Drunkenness

= being controlled by foreign substances; wine, beer, drugs, etc

B. Revelings

The Romans had village festivals, with lots of carousing and drinking, even orgies. Of course, the child of God must have nothing to do with such practices.

Notice something. Paul listed 17 vices. But his list is representative, not exhaustive.

C. And the Like (21)...

Listen. All sin has to go. Every work of the flesh must be crucified (24). Before we can ever experience the wonderful fruit of the Spirit, we must confess and forsake the works of the flesh.

Illust:

And lest we miss the importance, Paul offers this sobering word of caution...

The Caution (21):

V 21 "of which I tell you...shall not inherit the kingdom..."

Please don't water that warning down. The Bible does teach that true Christians are eternally secure. But imitation Christians aren't.

Q: How can I tell if I'm an imitation Christian?

A: Look at the fruit of your life.

Problem: One factor that causes great harm to evangelism is this--Christians who live according to the flesh.

Illust: Talking to unsaved man this week (Andy)--so confused about Christianity. Why? He'd met and worked with person after person who called themselves a Christian, but lived just like the rest of the world...

Warning: If you continually manifest the "works of the flesh," you are giving evidence that you really are not a child of God. Paul's not talking about an act of sin, but a habit of sin.

Challenge: You can experience victory over sin even tonight. There is hope through Jesus Christ. You can tap into the power of the Spirit.