

Galatians

Chapter 5:16-21

March 5, 1995

- **Galatians 5:16-21**

After a brief departure from Galatians last week, we now return to our text. But, we must bring with us the things that we learned while away from it. We can summarize what we learned:

- Natural man is spiritually dead, not sick.
- Natural man is therefore ruled by his flesh.
- This state of rule by the flesh (spiritual anarchy) is called in Scripture the old man and commonly referred to as the sinful nature.
- This anarchy was crucified with Christ.
- When the Spiritual death died, it brought life.
- A Christian is a new creation called the new man.
- The flesh remains in the Christian but must be subdued.
- The Spirit of God rules in the Christian.
- The Spirit is bringing the desires of the body under submission.

Romans 8:12-14

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (NKJV)

In the previous verses of Galatians Paul alludes to quarrels and strife that probably were caused by the theology of the Judaizers. He refers to them as brethren (vs. 13) and reminds them that their liberty as Christians is not a license for the sin of the flesh but rather is a means by which we love each other. Someone who is indulging their flesh, is not going to be able to love their neighbor.

Galatians 5:16-21

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

- As we saw in other verses last week, Paul gives the instruction for Godly living; walk in the Spirit. It is one thing to have the Spirit and another thing to walk in the Spirit. The first is a fact of becoming a Christian the second is the process of Christian life.
- Someone who is attempting to resist the flesh by himself is fulfilling the deeds of the flesh as ever. The flesh can have a craving for self righteousness. The method for putting the deeds of the body to death is not mustering up enough willpower but rather doing so by means of the Spirit. This task is not one that we do for God; God accomplishes this task in and through us.
- When we sin by indulging the flesh, because we are Christians, we are distressed by our sin. But when Paul says that we do the things that we don't want to do, we must remember that this is not the type of bondage that we were in prior to becoming a Christian. The difference now is that we are able (by the Spirit) to say no to these demands of the flesh whereas before, we could not. In addition, the distress that we feel is confirmation that the Spirit of God is disciplining us.
- Paul then applies this teaching to the Galatians by equating walking in the flesh with being under the law. He tells them to walk by the Spirit and they won't be under the condemnation of the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)

- In non-Christians, the temptations are typically overt and visible and in a Christians the temptations may still be their but there are being brought under submission by the Spirit. We are told that the Christian can walk so that these desires are not fulfilled by means of walking in the Spirit.
- **Adultery** - 3430 moicheia {moy-khi'-ah} - This act of the flesh is a very specific kind of sexual impurity. It is the act of having or the desire for having a sexual relationship in the presence of a marital covenant not to do so. The mind of God is clearly revealed when in Scripture adultery was a capital crime. This was deemed to be an attack against the state as the family is the fundamental building block of any civilization. Without a sound family structure, a civilization turns to chaos.
- **Fornication** - 4202 porneia {por-ni'-ah} - Although fornication in our language is a very specific form of sexual impurity, this word refers to general sexual impurity which can include fornication, homosexuality, and any other perversion. Unlike adultery, fornication is the act of having or desire for having a sexual relationship without the presence of a marital covenant.
- **Uncleaness** - 167 akatharsia {ak-ath-ar-see'-ah} - This word has two meanings; the first is a lack of physical cleanliness and the second is a type of financial filthiness. This is not just wealthy but rich in a manner where spending is foolish and uncontrolled. This includes ostentatious and conspicuous spending. This temptation does not honor God as the source of wealth.
- **Lewdness** - 766 aselgeia {as-elg'-i-a} - This is unbridled lust or public flaunting of lust and shamelessness. Includes indecent body movements as well.
- **Idolatry** - 1495 eidololatreia {i-do-lol-at-ri'-ah} - The worship of false gods with the worship due the Lord. This is generally the replacement of the creation for the creator. Anything to which allegiance is paid that should be paid to God alone is idolatry.
- **Sorcery** - 5331 pharmakeia {far-mak-i'-ah} - This is a very interesting word. It is the word from where we get the English word pharmacy. This simply points out the connection between the occult and drug or poison activity.
- **Hatred** - 2189 echthra {ekh'-thrah} - This word describes those who get into feuds. The word is plural and is not referring to a general hatred but to those who like wrangles and disputes.
- **Contentions** - 2054 eris {er'-is} - Generally these are disputes that result from foolishness or careless words. Arguing about things that don't matter but nevertheless have broken fellowship over trivial things. This is combated by not allowing ourselves to elevate a trivial matter into a fellowship matter.
- **Jealousies** - 2205 zelos {dzay'-los} - This is not referring to the good jealousy that a husband might have for the affections of his wife or the purity that God requires from us. This is a jealousy through comparing blessings or competing or rivalry. Remember the mother who killed the mother of a competing cheerleader? Absolute foolishness and jealousy.
- **Outbursts of wrath** - 2372 thumos {thoo-mos'} - Uncontrolled temper and passion. This is a festering of anger which boils over and defiles others. Losing your temper as a Christian is caused by a working of your flesh and this must be said no to by the working of the Spirit.
- **Selfish ambitions** - 2052 eritheia {er-ith-i'-ah} - This is a self seeking pursuit of preeminence just like the disciples bickering about who was going to be first among the disciples. Wanting to be great is not a sin if you seek to do so the way Christ has said to achieve greatness through service.
- **Dissensions** - 1370 dichostasia {dee-khos-tas-ee'-ah} - This is creating a party spirit or creating of factions. The desire to be identified by some name or title is an act of the flesh and must be put to death. Divisions in the church are frequently founded on these ungodly dissensions.
- **Heresies** - 139 hairesis {hah'-ee-res-is} - These are improper understandings of God's word and a resulting gathering around a heretical teaching. This is promoted by basing our understanding upon our opinions.
- **Envy** - 5355 phthonos {fthon'-os} - This is a very destructive form of covetousness. While someone coveting may say that he wants something that belongs to someone else, envy goes further and says, "Well, if I can't have it then I don't want him to have it either." It attempts to level playing fields and fights against anyone have blessings that others do not. This is one of the central sins of Communism.
- **Murders** - 5408 phonos {fon'-os} - This is the putting to death of a human unlawfully. It would not include a wartime killing or the exercising of capital punishment.
- **Drunkenness** - 3178 methe {meth'-ay} - Drinking to the point of intoxication and thus losing self control. Those who are tempted to drunkenness must say no to these desires. Drunkenness is an act of the flesh, not a disease.

- **Revelries** - 2970 komos {ko'-mos} - wild and late parties to all hours of the night. There is a heavy emphasis in this word on the actual time that this carousing occurs.
- As he has said in other places, those who continue in these behaviors are not sons of God. Paul is not saying that those who have committed these things are going to hell, but rather those who practice or continue in them. Those who are not going to heaven can be characterized as people who controlled by these desires.