

PP Root to Fruit! *Going Deep, Growing Up*

Part 2-Galatians 5:19-21

1/13-14/2018

In 2010, we bought the church at Second Street, and there was a parsonage on the property and if you walked through it you had to watch where you stepped very carefully, because you might fall through the floor

We could have just left it like that and when people visited the church and asked, ‘*Hey, what’s that building*’, we could have just said, ‘*That’s our parsonage, we own it*’

‘*Well, are you using it?*’ ‘*No way, it’s not safe to even walk in there, mess everywhere...but it’s ours, we own it, isn’t that awesome what the Lord has given us?*’

That would sound crazy wouldn’t it?

We have an awesome building but we can’t use it, it’s a broken-down mess...just not right

But it would be no crazier than someone who has been set free by Christ who remains in the debilitating power of the flesh, overcome by a broken-down life of sin

PP Christian brother and sister, we are set free from the penalty, guilt and power of sin by the death and resurrection of Christ...in His death he paid for our sins, in His resurrection He broke the power of sin

PP But gospel freedom has a *from* and a *for*, and we’ve been set free for love

And the One Who helps us live this freedom is the Holy Spirit, Who battles against those old

B.C. desires that still rage within us, motivating us to defy God and please ourselves

It’s by walking with the Spirit that we have increasing victory over the flesh, yielding to His lead

Yielded to Him, listening to Him, looking for His interventions, trusting His guidance?

PP “*do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

We’ve been set free, but learning to live free is a life-long daily process

Let me say that again, slightly different: the moment we were made free, justified, saved, was instantaneous when we put our faith in Jesus alone

But it takes a lifetime and the power of God to learn to live in that freedom

If you are struggling to gain victory over the flesh, do not give up or give in to despair

The Holy Spirit, for each of us, pioneered the Extreme Makeover

But the question we all want to know-which is the aim of this series-is how?

There’s a bit of a desperation in us isn’t there, to experience this overcoming power?

Let’s begin with more look at verse 16, at one particular word I’ve saved until this week

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” 5:16

PP 1-The interrupted flesh

PP ‘*gratify*’ in the Greek is teleō, means to complete the goal or carry it through to the end

PP (same slide as above) Now let’s reread what Paul said in this verse: “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry the desires of the flesh to its end goal...sin*” 5:16

The Holy Spirit is the great interrupter, the disrupter of the flesh, the rescuer of the tempted

It is Paul saying in his way what James said in his epistle: “*But each person is tempted when he*

PP *is lured and enticed by his own desire.*” James 1:14

The goal of the flesh is not to better us, or anyone around us

It is not to make us happy, or satisfied, or improved though it promises all of these

The desire of the flesh has its sights on one thing, sin, and it presses us relentlessly toward it
 And the Spirit is engaged in hostile action against the flesh and commands us into the battle!
 And in this battle, we aren't trying to become lion tamers, but lion killers
 We don't want to control our sinful desires, we want to defeat them
 The flesh isn't going to become less evil, and it isn't going to become like Christ
 We really need to understand this: the gospel is not trying to transform the flesh, but kill it

PP ***"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."*** **Romans 8:13**

The Spirit, day by day, as we walk with Him and as we exert grace-driven effort, we are gaining victory over the desires of the flesh

Christian, it is normal when it dawns on you, *Hey, you know, I don't desire that terrible thing anymore...when did that even happen?*

That victory is not a 3-step method, it is when we learn to walk by the Spirit, yield to Him, and by His power kill the flesh, suffocating it like a flame with no oxygen

It's an all-out war and many Christians don't realize the aim of the flesh, so Paul shows us next

PP 2-The unveiled flesh

"Now the works of the flesh are evident:" **Galatians 5:19a**

It was common for spiritual leaders and philosophers to create lists of virtues and vices

There are many of them in historical writings, and several in the bible itself

But no list is the same and Paul is not trying to be exhaustive-***'and things like these'***

He didn't include gluttony, lying or murder to name a few

What he does is place side by side the products of the flesh, and the products of the Spirit

When the flesh has its way, here are 15 possible results

I thought of going through and defining each one in-depth, but you probably noticed that unfortunately, we're already intimately familiar with most of them

They are ***'evident'***, and sins that the Galatian Christians were struggling with

They are ***'works of the flesh'*** because we have the ability within us to produce these sins

But the ***'fruit of the Spirit'*** is different as every fruit grower knows

No matter how much they may protect their orchards from bad weather or insects, at the end of the day, the harvest is outside their control

What begins as a newborn, innocent-seeming desire, when it is full grown, is horrible!

PP ***"Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*** **James 1:15**

So Paul lists what the flesh's desires look like when they are full grown

"sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things these." **5:19-21**

Paul's list includes three areas that sin affects: our sexuality, worship and relationships

But Paul then warns us, ***"I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*** **5:21b**

At this point, are you worried, has the list included your own sins?

Perhaps several of them and possibly even most of them at one time or another?
 It is not out of the question that a Christian could read **5:16**, and be driven straight into despair
 Many have believed they lost their salvation, or maybe were never saved because of this verse
 One wonders how he could even be a Christian and still give in to the flesh and fail
 To **‘not inherit the kingdom of God’** is Paul’s way of saying you will go to hell
 It is true that all 15 of these sins ought to be the way a Christian lives
 And it is true that in doing any of these, we deserve the judgment of God, and the fires of hell
 But it is critically important to understand what Paul wrote with the word **‘do’**
 He put this word in a tense that means a continual, habitual practice of indulging in sin
 The Apostle John stated it similarly: **“Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is**
PP righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil...No one born of God
makes a practice of sinning.” 1 John 3:7-9
 Those who have believed in Jesus for salvation have been given new hearts with new desires
 They are free from the penalty, guilt and power of sin and free for a life of loving God and others
 The believer will manifest their new heart and desires by making a clean break from the lifestyle
 of these sins
 And the way to do that is by what some call grace-driven obedience, or mortifying the flesh

PP 3-The disempowered flesh

There must be a way to overcome these desires that seem so horribly powerful, and there is
 After all, Paul clearly tells us in Romans, **“So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to**
PP live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by
the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:12-14
 We are to put to death the deeds of the flesh, the 15 that Paul listed and their like, by the Spirit
 The war erupts as our flesh is trying to carry us away in its desires
 Walking by the Spirit doesn’t mean we won’t be severely tempted by wrong desires, it means we
 can have victory over them before they give birth to sinful deeds
 Paul chose the word **‘walk’** very deliberately, and in verse **25**, **‘keep in step with the Spirit’**
 He didn’t say journey with the Spirit, because then we neglect that little step in front of us
 It’s the little choices through the day that draw us away into sin, not usually the big ones
 Not a journey with the Spirit, but walk with Him and keeping in step with Him

Several times in the Old Testament, God speaks of holding us with His righteous right hand, as if
 we are walking hand in hand through life as a father and child
 The Spirit of God is living in us, walking with us, and what He is urging within us is to fight
 with Him
 Too many of us however, err in two directions: we fight in our power, or we just lay down the
 arms believing we are to do nothing and leave it the Spirit
 The truth is we fight with the weapons He supplies in the strength He gives us

A curious thing happens in marriage...spouses profoundly influence each other
 Before I met Denise, I never ate Chinese food, but now I love it
 Before she met me, she didn’t eat venison, but now she enjoys it

The covenant of marriage and the covenant with God where Christ dwells in us through the Spirit of God is profoundly influential in changing and giving new desires
 Walking with the Spirit is at the most simple level being with Him, spending time with Him
 It is spending time in the bible as it was written to reveal God, and what He loves and hates and how He wants us to live and not live
 In healthy marriages, there grows a desire to do what is best for the other person, what will truly lead to happiness
 Walking by the Spirit is beautifully, a relationship, not that different than any other one

It is one however where the Spirit invites us into the battle in our hearts and fights with us
 Always remember that the heart in biblical thought is the center of us: mind, emotions and will
 Our wills are being carried away by the flesh when we don't want to say no to that wrong desire
 Our minds are embattled when we begin to believe that the desires of the flesh will satisfy us
 Our emotions are caught up in the fight when we don't feel like obeying God, and everything in us is screaming to give in to the flesh's desires

Take '**envy**', one of the works of the flesh that Paul lists, what Greek dramatist Euripides said was the greatest of all diseases

It is the desire to possess something that another has to the point where you may even wish that if you cannot have it, they shouldn't either

PP Jesus says of envy, ***"For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness."*** **Mark 7:21-22**

This work of the flesh begins in the heart and carries away believers as well as unbelievers
 It springs into being when a friend gets a new house, or car, or promotion, or dream vacation, or loses 30 pounds, or has a wonderful marriage or thriving kids or healthy life
 Envy's built on selfishness and the belief that you deserve/need what the other has, to be happy
 This belief then powers the emotions of envy, the twin siblings of anger and bitterness
 Which fuels the choices of railing at your spouse or kids to shape them up, or trying every fad diet, or going into debt for your dream vacation...all the while the flesh is ruining you

The Spirit however begins convicting the believer, which is the expression of His grace in us
 His hand tightens around us, showing us the truth: Do you really believe that if you needed this for your happiness that your Heavenly Father would not give it to you?

He shows us how enslaved we are, unable to be happy for that person, mired in selfishness
 He reveals the ugly underbelly of envy, the rotten internal guts of such a powerful sin
 And we cry out to Him in confession, repenting of our wrong beliefs, and going to His Word to strengthen our faith that God loves us supremely

That our happiness is more than possessions, and sexy bodies, and problem-free living
 Our happiness is built on the relationship we have with God through Jesus and in the power of the Spirit and moment by moment we can live in joy and peace and contentment
 So we denounce the lie of envy, the sin of distrust, the horror of self-worship, and we instead bless the one we were envious, pray for that person, and strengthen our relationship

Friends, we are at war, and the stakes are high!

The flesh wants to carry us away into sin, which wants to enslave us to its passions

But thanks be to God, the Holy Spirit Who leads us into battle, fighting with us to say no to ungodliness

We will continue to examine in this series, how do we live out our freedom from the penalty, guilt and power of sin, for the purpose of loving God and others

For this week, let the Spirit of God open our eyes to the battle within, and lead us to victory!

Amen?

Pray