



Galatians 5:16-26 – The Deeds of the Flesh

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

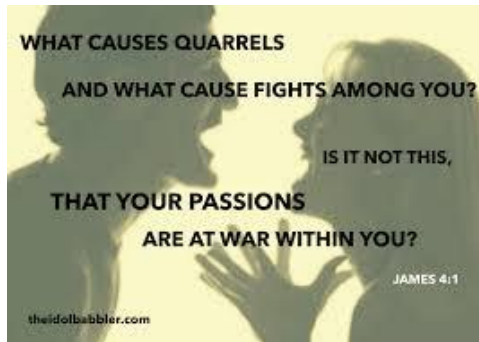
²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:16-26, NASB).



During my vacation I read a book on spiritual warfare. It was written by an orthodox Christian. He had several degrees, some of which were from well known Baptist seminaries. The book looked into the biblical evidence of demons and basic doctrines of demonology. As the book progressed, it analyzed the existence of demons and what influence, if any, they might have in the believer's life. As I continued through the book, it became evident that the author was blurring the line between what we might call demon oppression and demon possession. By the end of the book, the author was saying that Christians can be "demonized" without knowing it. He described counseling sessions in which he literally called out demons that were supposedly within believers, and their presence was causing these believers to be hopelessly mired in patterns of sin. He alleged that past traumas and/or habitual sinful conduct permitted demons to basically come into a believer and take over their will. So, why is this important to us this morning?

This is important because we need to understand more about sin and where it comes from. Is it something that is our own fault, or is it something that comes on us and is beyond our control? I am here to tell you categorically today that if you are a Christian you CANNOT BE DEMON POSSESSED. I think I would like to do a teaching on this in the very near future, because it is very important to understand what spiritual warfare is really all about. As a believer, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God and God will not co-exist with demons or anything else. You are sealed with the Holy Spirit when you come to faith in Christ, and like a package that is hermetically sealed, Satan and/or his demons cannot break that seal.

In this letter to the Galatians Paul has been hammering home the concept that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone. Last week, Larry talked about the first verses of the chapter, explaining ways that Christians today add things to the clean unadulterated gospel. Paul has been clear that our conduct as believers falls into two categories: 1) deeds done in the flesh, and 2) deeds done in or by the Spirit. The Spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit that is the promised gift to each and every believer.



What we're talking about today is how sin originates in our lives and what the fruit of that sin is. What does it look like when we're controlled by our flesh? Some of you all are old enough to remember the comedian Flip Wilson. He had a skit and whenever he did something bad, he would simply explain, "The devil made me do it." Well, the good news and the bad news today is that the devil can't make you do anything if you are saved. It is our own free choice that causes us to choose to do things motivated by our flesh or to do things by submitting ourselves to the beautiful plan of God and the workings of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. This is not to say that we are not engaged in a war "against flesh and blood." Believers can be oppressed and hassled and influence by demons if they open themselves to it. But, scripture is clear that sin comes up out of our own hearts. Whether we feed the old sin nature within us, or whether we give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit is a personal choice made with our own free will.

James, the younger brother of Jesus, explained the origin of sin in our lives in his beautiful letter. I want to read Gene Peterson's paraphrase in the Message so that everyone in here will understand what I am talking about.

4¹⁻² Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it.

2-3 You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way.

4-6 You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."

7-10 So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner

life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet.

¹¹⁻¹² Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his Message, his Royal Rule, that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honoring the Message, not writing graffiti all over it. God is in charge of deciding human destiny. Who do you think you are to meddle in the destiny of others? (James 4:1-12, THE MESSAGE).



When you come to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit of God comes into you. He resides within you and is ever present within you to comfort you, empower you, and guide you. We each have this amazing power within us which is the Holy Spirit of God Almighty to empower us to live lives of freedom and power. Unfortunately, we also still have an old sin nature that was present in us before we were saved. It does not possess us because God does not intend to “dominate” us or possess us. Rather, the Holy Spirit indwells us (lives inside of us) and is ever present to guide us, direct us, and give us the power and the ability to live a holy and renewed life. So, there within us, is the Holy Spirit of God and the old sin nature that can also be called our “flesh.” The journey to holiness (or becoming more Christ-like) involves how much of which are you willing to let dominate your soul and your life.

James is clear that sin originates in our lives because “we want our own way”. It is born out of our own lust (that’s an old word for desires). When our lust takes over, we want what WE want. We want people and possessions that don’t belong to us, and James says we want them so much that we enter into conflict (we will kill) to get them. James says we’re like “spoiled children.”

Paul explains in the verses below, the fruit of a life that is lived in pursuit of pleasing the flesh.

¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21, NASB).

Immorality: Let’s look at each of these a minute and break down what they really can look like in our lives if we allow them to take control. First is immorality. So, what is immorality? The online dictionary defines morality as **“a person's standards of behavior or beliefs concerning what is and is not acceptable for them to do.”** Can anyone see what is wrong with this definition? The world defines morality as subjective. That means that your morality is whatever your own standard is for what is acceptable for you to do. That definition fails. Think about it for a minute. The Nazis’ morality was their own standard of killing others who didn’t

believe like they believed. When we live by the flesh, we are applying OUR OWN STANDARDS TO OUR LIVES INSTEAD OF APPLYING GOD'S STANDARDS OF RIGHT AND WRONG TO OUR LIVES. Paul explains that the first deed of the flesh is just living by our own right and wrong. When the Holy Spirit of God rules in your heart, you will live by God's standards of right and wrong.

Impurity: The flesh does not like to live in a pure way. Purity involves living a life without contamination or adulteration. Think of it as a life without additives from the world. That means that you're living one way, a pure way. When you adulterate something, you mix something with it that makes the original substance of a lesser quality. If you add water to your Dr Pepper, you're no longer drinking Dr Pepper. You're drinking some adulterated version of Dr Pepper. The flesh wants to mix in with the world and adopt the values (what is valuable) of the world. Our old sin nature wants to mix with the world to be comfortable with the world. That is in conflict with the things of God.

Sensuality: The world and the flesh define meaning by pleasure. A person given over to sensuality is a person who has become a slave to physical and emotional pleasure. Living for sensuality means that you're driven by the desire to feel pleasure. Pleasure and intensive emotions become the sole focus of your life. The desire for pleasure leads to addictions of all kinds: sex and pornography addiction, alcohol addiction, drug addiction, anger addiction, and even the addiction of having power over others (abuse). You may wonder how bursts of anger are similar to addiction to sex or alcohol. It is because the person who engages in bursts of rage experiences a huge burst of adrenaline into their bloodstream. That adrenaline gives them an emotional rush similar to the high experience in other pursuits of pleasure. Being driven by these desires for pleasure leads only to emptiness.

Idolotry: The flesh focuses on anything but God. Self, others, or things become the object of our affections and worship. An idol is ANYTHING or ANYBODY that comes between you and God. The flesh will drive you to find love and acceptance, value and worth, and an identity in things other than God.

Sorcery: The online dictionary defines sorcery as "the use of magic, especially black magic." Engaging in sorcery is looking for answers to spiritual questions by going to the wrong sources. As believers, we are not to be fixated on the future and trying to figure it out. Of course, sorcery includes chasing after other religions and chasing after spiritual power outside of the power provided to every believer, but it is not limited to that. Scripture is explicit that we are to avoid horoscopes, fortune tellers, ouija boards, or any other such thing that promises to show us the path or the way for our lives. Jesus was very clear when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 author's paraphrase). Please keep in mind that sorcery sometimes also refers to the use of drugs. "In the New Testament the word *pharmakeia* occurs three times (Gal 5:19-21; Rev 9:21; 18:23). Each time, it is translated as 'sorcery' or 'magic' and it is something that is spoken of in negative terms."¹ Pharmakeia is where we get our modern word pharmacy. While not all drug use is

1. ¹ <https://www.massbible.org/exploring-the-bible/ask-a-prof/answers/pharmakeia>

considered sorcery, generally illegal drugs are as they open people up to the demonic realm and pollute the channel to God.

Enmities: The online dictionary defines this as “the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something.” A good example of this is racial prejudice. Racism is wrong not because of something the world says, but because it is a sin. Hatred of others for the believer is sin. It is really that simple. It is our flesh that drives us to hate others because of their skin color or their place of origin in the world. Paul tells us explicitly that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. In Christ there is “no Greek nor Jew.”

I will take the next laundry list together in the interest of time:

Strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions – this speaks to divisive conduct. Strife is “stirring it up.” Often people “stir it up” because it is manipulative conduct that makes one feel powerful. Gossip and a preoccupation with others is part of strife. We are told repeatedly in scripture that God hates divisive conduct and we’re told to eject people from the fellowship when they “stir it up” and bring chaos” and when they engage in disputes, creating factions. Believers are called to the ministry of reconciliation and unity.

There is a ton of this type of conduct on Facebook. I am careful to weigh what I say. Will it make a difference? Is it necessary? Will it hurt my testimony as a Christ-Follower? Unity is especially important within the church and within the members of the church. We’re pretty much commanded to boot folks out who create division and factions. God hates such activity. I have told some that have come through our doors that they are welcome to come hear the Word and be part of this community of faith, but when they become divisive or create factions, they will be asked to leave. As pastor, I have a duty to maintain unity of spirit and to insure that a healthy environment exists in the Body where all can progress to a positive place. This isn’t talking about mere disagreements. This is talking about those who in the flesh want to make sides and take sides. We should all be on one side in this building. The side of Jesus Christ doing a redemptive work in our own life and in the lives of others within these walls.

Envyings, drunkenness, and carousing (and other such things): Paul ends his list when a person is divisive.

Paul has used this part of his letter to give a serious warning to the Galatians. These are serious indicators that a person is living according to the flesh. Paul is saying that people who behave like this and who habitually and continuously live like this will not be in heaven. Is he saying that we can lose our salvation by doing such things? NO. He is saying that people who have lived like this in the past, and who live like this in the present show no indication of a redemptive work of Christ in their lives. This passage is NOT SAYING that a Christian can lose his or her salvation by falling into sins of the flesh from time to time, rather a person who lives

continually on such a level of moral depravity gives very strong evidence that they never were in fact a child of God.

Next time we will look at the contrast of living a life led by and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Probably one of the most comforting verses dealing with this whole idea of the war within us, is also something said by James, *“7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:7, 8a NIV)*. Yes, we are in a spiritual battle, but help is just a whisper away.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.