

## Galatians ch 5 vs17-21

(Liberty; not License)

In our last gathering a couple of weeks ago we took the time to evaluate or sort of plumb the depths of vs 16, assessing the principle of victory through surrender. Walking in the Spirit, and obtaining victory over the flesh through surrender to the Spirit of God. Recognizing that victory over the flesh doesn't come through suppressing the flesh through the efforts of the flesh, that's an oxymoronic type of a statement.

How can you use the flesh to defeat the flesh, and yet so many people seek to do just that. They try and suppress the flesh through certain rituals, or self-discipline, or penance, repetitive prayers and all of these things just sort of self-inflicted torture only to find themselves perpetually more frustrated and unable to gain victory over those areas of weakness in their lives as it pertains to the flesh.

Paul in Gal ch 5 vs 16 unlocks the mystery of leading a life of victory over the flesh and it's accomplished by walking in the Spirit, in submission to the Spirit. Walking on the spiritual side of your nature, in intimacy and fellowship, or communion with God. That's how (in short) one obtains victory over the appetites of the flesh life, those ungodly, or even uncontrolled and unbridled cravings of natural humanity (and we took the time to explore what all that entails in our last gathering.) But it comes through cultivating a personal relationship with the one true living God, by abiding in prayer, abiding in fellowship with other godly individuals who are going to keep you accountable, and by abiding in His word. David asked the question "*How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.*" Again, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!*"

Walk in the Spirit, walk in the light of the word of God, allow God to make application of it into your daily life and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh, those sins that seek to separate us from God. Just become enraptured and enthralled with the person of Jesus Christ and those things that seem to wet your appetite in the flesh will just fall dormant and lose their luster, or their appeal.

Remember I told you of twice that we have it recorded for us in scripture of how this applied in the life of Moses. Twice while on Mt Sinai Moses neither ate nor drank anything for 40 days and 40 nights, the "appetites of his flesh" lie totally dormant. and He wasn't trying to impress God, he wasn't seeking to suppress his flesh through the efforts of his flesh, as a matter of fact, I suggest to you that he wasn't even mindful of the desires of his flesh. I suggest to you that the lusts of his flesh were just consumed by the presence and the glory, and the goodness, and the grace, and the love of God.

Moses was just so overtaken by the presence of God that the appetites of his flesh were just completely irrelevant. and Again I suggest to you that the same principal applies to your life and to mine, as you take the time to get into the presence of God, to be overtaken by God's goodness and God's grace and His mercy, the appetites of your flesh will become irrelevant. Walk in the Spirit, walk in fellowship and intimacy with God, submit yourself and surrender to the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Again notice it's a walk, it doesn't say "stand" in the Spirit, it says walk, speaking of that forward progressive movement, we're not to grow stagnate as believers, we're to be moving forward, growing in grace, forgetting those things which are behind, repenting of our sins and pressing on "*toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" So walk in the Spirit (finish vs) Paul goes on.

Vs17

Paul now relating the fact of the warfare that goes on in the life of the believer and the fact that he's very aware of that warfare, it's not as though Paul is living a life somewhere in wonder land where everything is peachy. He's very aware of the struggles that go along with living in this tent and he kind of capsulizes that struggle right here, what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are contrary to one another or diametrically opposed to one another, they antagonize one another and are at war; one with the other. It's impossible that they should cooperate with one another.

To go back to the illustration that Paul used earlier on in the book of Galatians even as when Ishmael the son of the flesh was born, being born through human ingenuity and human capability, there was no real problems seemingly. But when Isaac came along, the son of promise, born as a result of the work of the supernatural, born by means of the Holy Spirit doing a radical work, then trouble started. The son of the flesh began to persecute the son of promise, that which was of the flesh persecuted the work of the Spirit. Notice vs 23 of ch 4 (read on through beginning of vs 24) now jump down to vs28-29. Now we know that in direct context he's in regards to the legalist who operate in the flesh persecuting those who walk in the spirit under grace. But surely we can see application as it relates to the old life of the flesh seeking to rise up and persecute the new nature that we've been given and there's not a believer that's walked the face of this earth that hasn't dealt with this issue to some greater of lesser degree.

The struggle between the flesh and the spirit, the old nature and the new, one once the spirit has come alive in my life, prior to meeting Jesus Christ I was just Mr. Flesh man, no real struggle; I just did what I wanted when I wanted. But when even though I was dead in trespasses and sins, *“in which I once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh,”* (Paul says) *“fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”* (by grace you and I have been saved).

Now that this new nature has been made alive in me, the war has begun, the struggle has commenced, the striving for the position of mastery over my life was instigated. Will I be mastered by the Spirit or will I be mastered by the flesh? and If I'm going to be mastered by the flesh then I'm going to have the mind of the flesh, and we spoke about that last time. My will be constantly on fleshly things, I will be walking in the flesh, my mind seeking out how to fulfill the desires of the flesh, meanwhile my spirit lying dormant. and The mind that is constantly set on the flesh is in sad shape because it's alienated from God, it's in reality at war with God, that's what the bible teaches.

Paul addresses that reality in the book of Romans ch 8:5-8. He says that *“those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded (or fleshly minded) is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity (or literally hatred) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”* Why because God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth, so if you're in the flesh, you're not in the Spirit, therefore you are alienated or separated from God.

But if my life is dominated by the Spirit then my mind is going to be set on the things of the Spirit, seeking to fulfill the desire of God for my life through submission to Him the end result being life and joy and peace. So even as the mind of the flesh is death, the mind of the Spirit is life and joy and peace. and So the war goes on, do I yield to the flesh, or do I yield to the Spirit, and this struggle happens daily, I'm given the choice daily to walk in the Spirit or to walk in the flesh.

That's why Jesus said in Luke 9:23-24 *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”* There we see that principle again of victory through surrender, but it's a daily decision to reckon the old man to be dead, indeed crucified with Christ. and Even more than that many times it's multiple times daily, whereby I come to this fork in the road of my life so to speak. and I'm given a choice, do I walk in the flesh, or do I walk in the Spirit.

For example, you're driving down the road, you're kind of in a hurry someone whips out in front of you and hits the brakes down to about 30mph in a 45 and suddenly you're faced with a choice. Do I get all upset, blow off steam, hoot and holler, and make all kinds of racket, or so I just say, "oh Lord, you know my schedule and I trust that you're in control and who knows that this guy didn't just save me from a head on collision just right down the road, thank you Lord for your sovereignty." and You drive on, but then who knows you keep going and as you get near the rail road tracks that fella, drives on through but that arm comes down to quick for you to make it. Now you're given another choice, you can say for crying out loud as if I wasn't late enough, and start blowing off in the flesh, or you can submit to the Spirit and patiently wait.

You see it isn't a once and forever kind of a thing, now it is one time thing that I reckon myself to be crucified with Christ when I accepted Him as my personal Lord and Savior, but now I have to apply that reckoning so many times a day in so many different situations of life as they arise. Hey, that old nature, the old Jeff, he's dead, crucified with Christ, and it's important that I leave him there and don't try to revive him, that's my old nature that gets all upset and starts ranting and raving in any given circumstance, my pride wanting it's way, insisting on it's own way, that's what we're to reckon to be dead, crucified with Christ.

It doesn't matter what my old nature wants, we're not to make provision for it, by feeding it anger, or jealousy, or bitterness and envy or any other thing that seeks to sooth the fleshly side of our nature. We're to reckon the old man dead, and to walk in the newness of life, to walk in the Spirit, to walk in Love, and be pleasing to God. But that doesn't always happen does it and so we can too readily testify to the validity of this vs, the flesh warring against the Spirit and the Spirit warring against the flesh, the battle raging back and forth, and so many times I do the things I wish not to do. and We could deviate real easily here into Romans ch 7 but we won't, that which I will to do I don't do, and that which I will not to do, that I find myself doing.

The remedy for that condition isn't found in some super human will power, some 7 step program or self help method, it's through Jesus Christ our Lord, He's the One that saves us from this body of death, it's by Him in us that we walk in the Spirit. with out Him we can do nothing, but we can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us. and So when we fail the Spirit is right there to correct us and convict us and chasten us. and That's one of the ways I know that I'm a child of God, if I weren't a child of God He'd just let me go, and wouldn't bother correcting me.

There's sort of a comfort in the correction of God, and David found that to be true as well, that's why he said, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me, the rod is what the shepherd would use to smack the sheep back in line if it started drifting from the flock. and So when the Lord smacks you with the rod to get you back in line because you've been drifting from the flock, don't despise that, embrace it, be thankful for it, let it bear witness on your heart and bring you comfort knowing that you are one of His. Turn with me to the book of Hebrews (ch 12 Vs3-11)

David said "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*" God is so concerned with our eternal well being that He will chasten us here in the temporal to ensure we maintain that proper perspective and dependency upon Him. and No servant is above His master and yet the book of Heb again tells us in regards to Jesus Christ that, "*though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*" Paul goes on in vs 18

Vs18

If you're led by the Spirit, you are not under the law, not led by the flesh, not you being captain of your own destiny, commander of your own ship, but rather being led by the Spirit. Jesus said in John 16:13 that when "*the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.*" He will teach you the truth concerning the word of God, and make it real in your life, if your led by the Spirit of God, your not under the law, why, because the law makes slaves, the Spirit makes Sons, Rom 8:14 "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*"

Having been made free in Christ, no longer under the dominion of the law, the bondage of the law, and the condemnation of the law, but rather we've been set free and have been given liberty and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Liberty to grow and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds by the washing of the water of the word of God. Now this vs isn't saying that you're never going to make a mistake, or that you're never going to fall short. What Paul is saying is simply that believers in Jesus Christ do not relate to God on the basis of law performance, if you're led by the Spirit, if you're abiding in Christ, you're not under the law, it's not the law that guides you, it's the Spirit of God, who's written the law of God on your heart, and it's Him that does in you what you could never do for yourself. But in Christ we're not led or governed by the law, we're led by and governed by the Spirit.

Vs19-21

Through out the remainder of this ch Paul gives us a contrast between what characterizes the life of the individual who's driven by and controlled by the fleshly appetites. Vs the individual's life who has surrendered to and is dominated by the Holy Spirit, he's spoken of the war between the flesh and the Spirit, the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. and Now he expounds on those principals for further clarity, if you're being governed by the flesh, these types of things will be a consistent earmark of your life, if you're governed by the Spirit, the things that characterize your life will be totally different (and we'll look at those things next week.).

As we read over this list, it's practically like reading the Joplin globe, or watching the evening news, these are the things that characterize our society in general and so we could easily conclude that over all we are a people, a society that is enslaved to the works and the appetites of the flesh.

But yet Paul isn't writing to non-believers here is he, what a sad indictment against the body of Christ. You wouldn't think that you'd find these types of things running rampant with in the body of Christ; you'd expect them to be taking place in a bar somewhere down town. and Yet here we read where Paul is exhorting the body of Christ to be aware of these things and what they are so that if they're taking place in our lives we might recognize them for what they are and repent. Because to carnally minded is death, God loves us so much He makes things so clear to us in His word so that we might make the right choice. Like we sighted Wednesday evening Deut 30:19-20 "*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days.*" The Holy Spirit through Paul is saying here hey, this is the pathway of cursing, this is the life of the flesh, these are things that need repented of if they are or have been taking place in your life and you've yet to come clean before God and be renewed unto Him.

Adultery – sexual relations between a man and a woman of whom one or the other may be married but not to each other, that's a work of the flesh. and It would frighten you to learn of the extent that this takes place with in the "body of Christ", and yet it does. The word that's been translated "fornication" here is the Greek word "porneia" from where we get our word pornography; it speaks of "illicit sexual intercourse" prior to marriage.

Uncleaness- means just what it says, the filthiness of the heart and mind of an individual that defiles a person both morally, physically and spiritually. The unclean person sees some type of dirt or filth or perversion or has some snide remark to say about everything. Titus 1:15 *“To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.”* Lewdness or maybe your bible says lasciviousness or licentiousness. Turning the grace of God into a license to sin because where sin abound grace abounds still more, but listen, liberty in Christ is not license to sin.

As Christians there’s 2 extremes that we can teeter into if we’re not careful, 1 is legalism, the other is making God’s grace a license to sin. But neither extreme is what is meant by the term “liberty in Christ.” One commentator said, *“Life by the Spirit is neither legalism nor license, nor a middle way in between them, it is a life of faith and love that is above all of these false ways.”* We’ve been given liberty in Christ, not a license to sin, Spurgeon once said, *“the grace that does not change my life, will not save my soul.”* Think about that, if you’ve had a true encounter with Jesus Christ you’re not going to be able to go on sinning like there’s no tomorrow, you won’t want to grieve the Holy Spirit of God and hurt the heart of Jesus knowing what it cost Him to give you everlasting life. Or take the members of Jesus Christ and join them to a harlot, so if nothings changed in your life, you’d do well to question where your at with Jesus Christ

Take heed lest you be riding on a sense of false assurance thinking that because you come to church you’re going to heaven. You can draw near to Jesus Christ with your mouth all day long and honor Him with your lips, but if your heart is far from Him you won’t make it. Paul goes on, idolatry- now don’t be confused this isn’t limited to little trinkets of wood and stone, this includes whatever consumes you mentally, physically and financially, that’s your God. Whatever the master passion of your life is, it can be cars, careers, hobbies, and boyfriends/ girlfriends whatever.

Listen to what Jon Courson said from page 127 of his commentary on this book, and I quote. *“Although I’m an athlete, I think one of the biggest idols in our culture is sports. and I’m convinced that if we’re not careful, we actually teach our kids the idolatry of athletics whenever we say, “oh, of course you don’t have to go to church today. You have a game.” Too many believers don’t have the time to study the bible or fellowship with other believers because those things interfere with their kids or their own athletic pursuits. While I encourage you to have your kids in sports, to be there to cheer them on, if you forsake ministry, worship, or the study of the Word to do so, you’re guilty of idolatry.”*  
(End quote)

Again that master passion in your life. Sorcery or in reality “pharmakeia” from where we get the word pharmacy, it speaks of taking drugs and not for medicinal purposes. Hatred, contentions, jealousies- I found that one interesting, if you’re a jealous individual, always suspecting of others or always have to be the center of attention, jealous maybe of your husband or wife. I’m not speaking of protective or loving, I’m talking about an unhealthy jealousy, God sees it the same as murder, fornication, adultery and all the rest. Well I have a jealousy problem, but it’s really not that bad, well I have a little murdering problem but it’s really not that bad. Dude you’re a serial killer, well that’s different, is it really? Not according to my bible, flesh is flesh, he goes on, out bursts of wrath, - an explosive temper problem. Selfish ambitions, what’s in it for me, always looking out for #1, Jesus said I didn’t come to be served but to serve, and what I’ve done unto you I’ve done as an example that you should do to others. Dissensions, being divisive and sowing discord, being a gossip or a backbiter always spreading dirt. Heresies, heretics spring out of the flesh, wanting the ooohs and ahhs of all the people claiming to have some new revelation from God that no one else has ever had. But again Solomon said there’s nothing new under the sun, it may be something that God has shed fresh light on for you personally, but truth is as eternal as God Himself. So let this be a tool of discernment for you, if it’s new, it’s not true, and if it’s true, it’s not new. Envy- and this kind of runs along side idolatry, in the desiring that which someone else has, their title, their position, or their possessions. Col 3:5 “*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*” Wanting what another has, same thing as idolatry. Murders, drunkenness, and revelries, which is in regards to orgies and things of that nature. and Then notice Paul says “and the like” what does that mean, it means that this isn’t an exhaustive or all-inclusive list.

This is just a sample of what the flesh can produce; in 1 Cor 6:9-10 we find a similar list which mentions homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, and extortioners besides these. In Rev 22:15 we read of whoever loves and practices a lie being outside the kingdom. and So those that practice these things, now that’s important and something you should take note of, it’s not saying that we’ll never fail, Pastor Chuck has said something to the effect of sin isn’t falling down, it’s just lying there when you do. It’s making a habitual lifestyle out of these things with no desire to repent or be right before God.

People who lead lives that reflect these types of things do not inherit (notice that) the kingdom of God is not something you earn, it’s something you inherit, and it comes to you as sons of God being joint heirs Jesus Christ as you abide in Him through His grace. So if any of these things maybe characterize your life, I’d encourage you to get right with God, repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ Or if you’ve known Jesus Christ and you’ve backslidden into being dominated again by the flesh, then today is your day as well, the Lord is calling you back, chastening you, don’t despise that chastening, rejoice and embrace it, repent, return to your 1<sup>st</sup> love relationship with Jesus Christ and repeat those 1<sup>st</sup> works.