

OUR STRUGGLE: FLESH vs. SPIRIT

Text: Galatians 5:13-26

INTRO: In this passage, Paul contrasts the outcome of allowing ourselves to be led by our lower inclinations (the flesh), as opposed to being led by our higher inclinations (the spirit). The passage is in a larger context, where he emphasizes our freedom in Christ as opposed to the restrictions of Moses' law. But he indicates that freedom in Christ is not license, or permission, to sin.

I. THE CHRISTIAN IS FREE, vs. 13-18.

Not free TO sin, but free to rise above sin. In context, the freedom Paul discusses is freedom from the Law of Moses. Most of the Galatians were Gentiles. They had never been under Moses' law--but false teachers had come in among them and were seeking to bind that law upon them.

Note that Paul describes a struggle that goes on continually between our lower and our higher inclinations. There is within every person a desire to be a better person than he is--yet at the same time, there are desires and pressures that, if given in to, will make him a worse person than he is. Paul speaks of these inclinations as "the flesh" and "the spirit."

READ ROMANS 7:15, 19, 22-25; 8:1-6, etc.

II. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE EVIDENT, vs. 19-21.

The word "flesh" is used with regard to our lower or weaker nature.

Romans 6:19; Matthew 26:41.

A. Sins of Sensuality.

1. adultery (not in Nu; not in Latin, IS in Aramaic)
2. fornication.
3. uncleanness--impurity.
4. licentiousness--primary idea is that of shameless conduct.

B. Sins of False Religion.

1. idolatry--makes "god" as we want him to be.

2. sorcery--involves seeking after powers & knowledge God has not granted us to have.

C. Sins of Malice.

1. hatred.
2. contentions--expressions of that hatred.
3. jealousies.
4. outbursts of wrath--often a result of jealousy smoldering in the heart.

5. selfish ambitions.
6. dissensions--lit., standing apart.
7. heresies--the fruit of dissension. "sect".
8. envy.
9. murders. (not in Nu; IS in Latin & Aramaic)

D. Sins of Excess/Intemperance.

1. drunkenness.
2. revelries.
3. and the like...

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the [heathen]--when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, & abominable idolatries. (1 Peter 4:3).

III. BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS... vs. 22-23.

1. love--agape.
2. joy--delight, gladness. Denotes a radiance, a bubbling forth like a mountain spring that has an eternal source.

3. peace--harmonious relationship.
4. long-suffering--a quality of self restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. The opposite of anger, associated with mercy.

5. kindness--goodness expressing itself in grace, tenderness & compassion

6. goodness--includes the sterner qualities by which doing good to others is not necessarily by gentle means. Christ's cleansing the temple, rebuking the Pharisees, MT 23.

7. faithfulness.

8. gentleness--the opposite of self assertiveness & self interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.

9. self-control.

Neither God nor man has legislated against these characteristics.

IV. PAUL'S APPLICATION, vs. 24-26.

CONCLUSION: Let us put into practice what we have learned.

West Chester, PA, August 12, 1987

Exton, PA, August 16, 1987

La Porte, TX, September 20, 1987

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Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, October 1, 2000