

(Galatians) Works and Grace, Flesh and Spirit

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian liberty, freedom from the law, and the dangers of mixing works and grace.

Duration: 58:48

Scripture: Galatians 5:1-3, Galatians 5:13, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:19-21, Galatians 5:24

Topics: "Salvation By Grace", "Legalism Vs Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by recapping the previous chapter of Galatians, where Paul defends the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. He emphasizes the importance of not only receiving information but also applying it practically. The speaker then focuses on Galatians 5:1-4, where Paul warns against adopting a works mentality and trying to approach God through legalism. He explains that this shuts off the experience of God's grace and emphasizes the offense of the cross, which is often overlooked in today's popular message of just being a good person.

Transcript

So here we are tonight picking up in the fifth chapter of Galatians and just to sort of connect us with where we were previously. At the end of the fourth chapter, maybe you remember, Paul sort of finalizes his argument in defense of his doctrine, salvation by grace alone through faith alone. And after he takes a variety of approaches to the subject, looking at a number of different scriptural angles on it, he comes and he sort of solidifies the whole thing by once again looking at Abraham and at Isaac and at Sarah and Ishmael and shows how those people's lives, there was not only the obvious things going on, but there was sort of a hidden message in their lives as well.

And they were representative of the two different covenants. The one covenant that was based upon works and led to bondage and the other covenant that was based upon a promise and led to freedom and liberty. And so Paul's sort of his closing argument is just to prove once again that the law has no bearing on us who are in Christ.

And if we are in Christ, then we've got everything we could possibly have. And there's obviously no need to look for anything more. And there's certainly no need to try to find any help in the law because the law does nothing for us really except condemn us.

And that he's, you know, been establishing those facts all the way through. And so he comes now to really having stated his case to apply it to the believers in Galatia. He's reiterated the truth.

Now he's going to make application of it for them. And that's always an important part of teaching. It's not simply to pass on information, but it's to pass on information with the purpose of putting that information into practice.

And so there needs to be the application. And Paul was the master at bringing forth practical application. In one sense, he could be up on this really lofty level discussing these great theological themes, but he could always bring it back down to earth and make practical application of it.

And that's what we find him doing here. And so he says in chapter five, verse one, stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ. You who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace for we through the spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith for in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

And so Paul now pleads with them. He urges them to stand fast in the liberty. And you remember, most of you have been here throughout the duration of the study in Galatians.

These people, they had no idea about the law. It had no application or relevance to them whatsoever. They were just thrilled to be saved.

And they were enjoying just the glory and the blessing of the Christian life. But then these false teachers come in and they lay this big trip on them. And so they get all caught up in the law and they think this is the way to really be spiritual.

And Paul says, no, no liberty. That's what God wants us to have. He wants us to have freedom.

So he says, stand fast in that liberty and do not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Now, the Christian liberty that Paul has been referring to in this context is freedom of conscience. That's really what what he's talking about in this particular context.

Now, Christian liberty also ultimately is freedom from sin. And he's going to talk about that as well. But he's he's been talking primarily about freedom of conscience, freedom from the tyranny of the law, the dreadful struggle to keep the law with a view to winning the favor of God.

That's really what he's been talking about. You see, the law has a terrorizing ability upon us as sinners. And what's happened with the law quite often is that Satan has twisted it and manipulated it and utilized it as a tool of torment against people.

And and there have been people historically and there are people presently who have lived under this tremendous burden and in all kinds of bondage in regard to the law. The law is is like a tyrant over them and they live in constant fear and dread of falling short of the law and thereby coming under its condemnation. If you read the testimonies of some great men in church history, you find that they had that kind of experience with the law.

Martin Luther is a good example of that. Luther was tormented by the law. He lived under this intense condemnation because he knew that he had failed.

He knew that he wasn't living up to the standard. And he had one of those tender kind of consciences where he was just constantly being bombarded by his own failure and the guilt. And if you saw the movie that came out last year on the life of Luther, they really depicted him quite well as especially in the early stages before his conversion.

There he was just living under the tyranny of the law, living in fear, living in dread. So much so that he got to a point where there was a great hatred in his heart for God because he just couldn't understand why God would impose this system upon him that would just condemn him. The man who wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan.

If you read the book *Grace Abounding*, which is in a sense his testimony, you find a very similar sort of thing. He lived under the fear and the dread of judgment because he could see his own sinfulness and the law was this great enemy that was constantly condemning him. The great Victorian preacher Charles Spurgeon had a very similar experience.

And in his youth he lived in deep depression and you know almost suicidal in a sense because of his sense of guilt. And that's the kind of thing that Paul is talking about. God doesn't want us living in that kind of an experience.

Jesus came to liberate us from the tyranny of the law. He came to set us free from the guilt of our sin. He came to cleanse our conscience so we could live in a sense of God's favor and God's blessing upon our lives.

So it is the freedom of acceptance with God and of access to God through Christ. That's what Paul is saying to these guys that they need to hold on to this because it won't be long if they continue down the road they're going down. It won't be long before they find themselves under this intense condemnation and brought back into bondage under the law.

Now Paul goes on after verse one and he says some pretty powerful things here. He says if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing. Then he says I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

And then notice what he says you have become estranged from Christ. You who attempt to be justified by law you have fallen from grace. Those are heavy things.

But the gist of it is simply this that you have to approach God one way or the other. You cannot mix the two things. You cannot approach God by works and grace or by grace and works.

It's really one or the other but the reality is you can't approach him by works because you can't work your way into a position of favor with him because you're a sinner. So the reality is this there's only one way to approach God. There's only one way to have favor with God and if we try to add to that if we try to add anything to grace then we contaminate it and grace is no longer grace.

Grace is only grace if it's grace alone. If it's grace plus something then it's no longer grace. Once you add to it it's no longer grace.

So once a person says you're saved by grace but or plus and in addition to that you have to do this then they're not really talking about grace because grace stands alone. We're saved by grace alone through faith alone and any addition to that causes us to fall from grace. So Paul is saying you can't mix the two things.

It's an impossibility. Now you see the Judaizers these guys that had crept in they were not completely disregarding Jesus Christ or his crucifixion. At least they weren't doing that verbally but in essence Paul says that's actually what they were doing because if righteousness can come through any kind of a legal system Paul said Christ died in vain but it's proof that no legal system whatsoever could save us.

It's proof of that by the fact that Jesus Christ did die. So if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing and then he says if you become circumcised you're a debtor to keep the whole law. You see Paul is saying to them look the law is a package.

If you take one part of it you take the whole thing so better just leave it. If you take one part of it you've got it all but this fourth verse is the one that is really astounding. You have become estranged from Christ you who attempt to be justified by law you have fallen from grace.

Now what does that mean? Does it mean that they lost their salvation and is that the warning that's being given here? I think what he's saying is simply this again it's one or the other it can't be both. You cannot be experiencing the grace of God if you're trying to approach God through your works. The minute you adopt a works mentality the minute you go into a legalistic mode it's sort of like you shut grace off at that moment.

So it's one or the other it can't possibly be both. Now circumcision of course was a particular ritual that the Jewish men would go through but circumcision really stands for a whole theological position. Circumcision stands for a religion of human achievement of what man can do by his own good works.

Now the message of circumcision is preached all over the place today without circumcision ever being mentioned in it. You see because it's really just sort of symbolic of any works oriented kind of a system. And you know you can preach a message of good works and never offend a single person.

As a matter of fact the message of salvation by works is quite inoffensive to people because it flatters man and caters to human pride. It's the moment that you start preaching the cross because the cross says man is helpless. Man is hopeless.

The cross says there's nothing you can do to save yourself and that causes great irritation to people. Anyone who takes it upon themselves to really truly preach the gospel is inevitably going to offend people. You cannot avoid it because the cross itself is offensive.

Because it just it just gets right in the face of man and all of his pride and says there's nothing you can do. Now there are really only two religions in the world. There are really only two religions in the world.

The religion of works and the religion of grace. All religions regardless of their differences are in essence religions of works. The one exception is New Testament Christianity.

That to me and I've I know I've mentioned that before but that's an astounding thing to me. That that is to me just further confirmation of what I already believe. It's further confirmation of the truth of this message because all religions can be summed up in one phrase salvation by works except New Testament

Christianity.

And so in reality there are really only two religions in the world. One based upon works and one based upon grace. You could picture it in two men historically.

Cain and Abel. Cain is really the father of religion. He was the first man to try to work his way into God's favor.

And we know the story. We know what happened. Cain brought his sacrifice to God and God rejected it.

He said I won't accept it. And of course Abel brought his sacrifice to God and God did accept it. And the difference between the two is that Abel offered a sacrifice by faith.

Cain tried to approach God by work. So Cain really became in a sense the first religious person. The first man to try to obtain the favor of God through his own good works.

And he was completely rejected by God. And maybe you remember the story there Cain. He's angry over the fact that God has rejected his offering.

And the Lord speaks to him and he says why are you angry? If you do it right you'll be accepted. But yet Cain in his heart and heart and in his stubbornness in his rebellion instead of just doing it right instead of humbling himself he resists God's way. And he ends up as you know under the judgment of God.

And there are so many people that choose knowingly to do it their own way. I don't want to do it God's way. I don't like that way.

I don't think that that's the way it ought to be. And so I'm going to approach God based upon what I think would be the right or the best way to do it. And so they try to approach God through works but it'll never happen.

God will never accept those things. And so if we if we attempt to be justified by law notice that by law not by the law although it certainly is speaking of the law. But it's not just speaking of the mosaic law it's speaking of any law.

If we try to be justified before God by law it'll never happen. There's only one way and that's through Christ. And so he says for we through the spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

We eagerly wait for it. He doesn't say we eagerly work for it. He says we eagerly wait for it.

Christ has done it all. What are what are we doing now? We've received it and now we're just waiting for the fruition of it. We're waiting for it to come to its culmination.

And then I love what he says here for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything but faith working through love. You see it's not about outward ceremonies. It's not about formulas.

It's not about rituals. It's not about those things. You know Jesus Christ did not come into the world to start a new religion.

The world had plenty of religion when Jesus came. He came to connect people with God. And he came to in a lot of ways just sort of do away with the religious trappings that were keeping people confused and in

the dark about God.

He says you ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from him who calls you. Paul again is getting personal with him.

He says you were doing so well. You were running so well. And I'm sure as the one who had laid the foundation of that church and ministered to them I'm sure Paul at one point was so pleased and so proud in the good sense you know like a proud father.

And now he's just looking and who hindered you? This persuasion doesn't come from him who called you. This isn't God leading you into this. He said a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

And so he warns them that allowing this to come in it might seem fairly innocent in the earliest stages of it. It might seem harmless. They might even be wondering Paul what are you getting so worked up for? I mean you know we're just you know Judaism and the history and the Moses and we're just you know Paul you're getting carried away.

We're still loving God. Don't worry. But Paul says oh no you don't understand the nature of sin.

You don't understand the nature of error. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. It just takes a little bit.

And that little bit can go through so quickly and permeate the whole thing. Boy I think of church history and I think of the little compromises that were made along the road that I'm sure if anyone would have ever dreamed where it would go in the end they wouldn't have done it. But they didn't see they didn't they didn't realize that they were planting the seeds for so much trouble later on.

But Paul knew a little leaven. It's all it takes is just a little bit of this idea that that we're going to work our way into God's favor. That that this this you know ancient religious system is going to enhance our worship experience and all of that.

He just knows the tendency of human sinful nature and how when these things come together it just makes for a disastrous situation. But then he says I have confidence in you and the Lord. So Paul is he's still holding out hope and he wants them to know at this point that he hasn't given up on them.

But he's speaking very strongly to them. I have confidence in you and the Lord that you will have no other mind but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment whoever he is. So Paul is very indignant concerning the ones that have come in and troubled them.

And then he says and I brethren if I still preach circumcision why do I still suffer persecution. There were some who evidently were implying that Paul had agreed that they were right and he was now preaching the same message. You see Paul wasn't there.

He wrote this letter to them. He was absent and in his absence these false teachers had come in. And they criticized Paul and they challenged his authority as we've pointed out and they attacked his apostleship and they denied his doctrine.

And evidently some even said and by the way you know Paul we sorted him out on this too. And this is what he's preaching now. And Paul says if I'm preaching that why am I still being persecuted.

You see the reality is if you're preaching that nobody will ever persecute you. Because there's nothing offensive about man being able to save himself. It's the message that man can't save himself that we've already alluded to.

That's what offends. Oh there are churches and pulpits and people that gather together every week. Every Sunday.

And they preach and no one's ever bothered. No one's ever offended. No one's ever affected by it.

They're just encouraged that you're a good person. It's all there within you. Just reach down and tap into that goodness that's deep in your soul.

There's that spark. And you just kindle that spark. And people are just like oh I knew that was true about me.

That's great. I'm going to do that. I'm going to get myself on a spiritual program.

And I'm going to pursue those things. And they walk away feeling good. Basically what they're thinking is I'm going to save myself.

And sadly that that message is quite popular today. Very popular. Just be a good person.

Just do your best. Hey you know God he understands. He knows your desires and things.

And just as long as you just try to be as good of a person as you can. You know in the end everything is going to work out just fine. And that's that's a message tragically that goes out from from many pulpits.

There's so much confusion in the Christian world because you have those men that stand up and say those kinds of things. And nobody's ever offended. Because they'll never persecute you for that.

But the cross is offensive. The offense of the cross. Paul speaks of that here.

That's the thing that offends people. Oh remember the furor over over the passion of the Christ. I mean has there ever been a movie in all of history that has gotten the the the publicity that the passion of Christ got? I mean it was a great promotional tool.

But all of the you know just people coming unglued. The audacity of Mel Gibson. I remember reading a a little paragraph by Kirk Douglas.

Just chastising Mel Gibson for the audacity to make a movie like this. And the Jewish community you know that you know crying out anti-semitism. It's gonna bring about a new inquisition.

And everybody was chiming in on oh you know what a what a great disservice Mel Gibson was doing to mankind at this present time. I mean after all don't we have enough problems and we got to bring this Jesus and the cross thing up again. People offended.

Some people just seething. I mean you could just practically see them foaming at the mouth. All over a depiction of Jesus going to the cross.

But it shows you that the offense of the cross hasn't ceased. And you know here's the crazy thing. You know this.

But you can go out in public. You can go almost anywhere and you can preach the most bizarre ridiculous outlandish kind of stuff. And you'll get people to applaud you.

I read an article a few weeks ago Alanis Morissette. She's been she's been praying and communicating over the years through the Eiffel Tower. She visited Paris one time and there was just some connection between her and the Eiffel Tower.

And so she you know she kind of has used that to determine you know decisions and things in life. And you know I'm reading this article and man that was so cool. The Eiffel Tower Alanis Morissette.

Oh man that you know more power to her was the gist of the article. And then you know now the big craze among the Hollywood elite. Kabbalistic Judaism.

Everybody's into the Kabbalah now. Madonna and Britney and the whole crew. And everybody's jumping on the bandwagon.

Getting into this mystical Judaism. And you can read in the you know the celebrity magazines and all about what they're doing. And oh it's so exciting and fun and great.

Come on down to the synagogue. And but talk about somebody who's born again. Somebody who's come to believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

Oh man. Get rid of those loonies. Mel Gibson.

No no room for him anymore. But we see it clearly. And it always has been the case and it always will be the case.

The cross is an offense. Again for the simple reason that the cross says to all people. You're evil.

You're sinners. You're lost. You're helpless.

You can't do anything you're going to hell. And the only way you're going to escape it is if you cry out for a Savior. That's what the cross says to people.

And that's why people get offended. That's why people are so angry. Because it chafes our pride.

I don't want to be told that. I don't want to think that. I don't want to agree with that.

But that's the reality. That's the message of the cross. That's the offense of the cross.

In verse 12 Paul says regarding those who were troubling them. Leading them astray. He said, I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off.

You know what Paul is referring to here is castration. Paul was he was passionate. He says these guys are into circumcision.

I wish they'd go a bit further. Now you know you say something like this today and oh intolerance. They scream.

But you know this is this is life and death. This is heaven and hell. This is truth.

And Paul takes this seriously. And we today have to take these things seriously. You know I was speaking to a lady that I met recently.

And she listens to the radio evidently occasionally and knew me from that. And we were just having a brief conversation. And you know it was a light-hearted conversation.

And she suddenly says to me she says, oh you're much different than I thought you were. After two minutes of conversation. She says, when I listen to you on the radio you're always so serious.

And so I got real serious. Didn't want to get out of character for too long there. And that was fine.

But you know I thought well this is pretty serious stuff. You know these are serious matters. Sometimes we're so frivolous in our approach to life and the world and all.

But well Paul was serious. He was a serious guy. And he saw the potential damage.

And he saw what was at stake. And so he speaks out. Paul's not in the flesh here.

He's not out of control. Just you know saying things that later on oh I wish I wouldn't have said that. No he's serious about this.

Because eternity's at stake. And we have to be this way. Because as you know already we are living in a time when there's so much pressure on us to not say anything negative.

To not imply that people might possibly be wrong about things. And never to suggest that there's only one way to be saved. I mean that's the height of arrogancy they feel.

But that's the message of the New Testament loud and clear. And we have to continue to speak up and to speak out and to boldly let the truth be known. We've got to do it.

There's so much pressure though to just be quiet. Don't say that stuff. But that's the way the devil works you know.

That's what he does. He tries to silence the truth. He tries to intimidate us so we don't say anything.

And so many people succumb to it. So many people just they fall prey to those tactics. And then you know as time goes on you find that less and less they're willing to address some of the hard issues.

I mean look at how the homosexual community has made such unbelievable inroads into society. And really it is today almost to the point where and you know it out in public if you if you say anything negative about that lifestyle people oh no you shouldn't say that. Why? But you see that's the tactic.

To intimidate and to keep people from saying things. Speaking out. Telling the truth.

So we can just keep on railroading our agenda right into people's lives. And you see that with that particular situation. You see it with all of the praise and the flattery that's coming through the media toward Islam today.

You know I was talking to a man earlier this week who grew up in India. And he was saying that the great tragedy he sees in America today is that nobody's listening to the people who grew up in the midst of Islam. If they would listen to the people that have lived in the midst of it they would get a real education as

to the true nature of it.

Islam has an agenda and that's world domination. And it's plain and simple. And it's declared right in their literature.

And it's evidenced in their activity. But oh no no no don't say that. We can't say stuff like that today.

Islam is a religion of peace. It's a religion of peace as long as you do what they say. That's the reality.

As long as you submit to them then you can have an element of peace. So we need to continue to stand firm and to be strong. And sometimes we have to make statements that are not going to be appreciated by many.

But that's the way it is. The greatest trap you can ever fall into is the trap of wanting everybody to approve of you. Jesus said woe to you if all men speak well of you.

I take great comfort in that because I don't have that problem myself. But remember we read last week Paul's words. Have I become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth.

The reality is truth offends people. People would rather be lied to. They would rather you tell them anything but the truth.

It's just part of the twisted human situation. But Paul says well here's the reality. I wish these guys would castrate themselves.

For you brethren have been called to liberty. Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another.

You've been called to liberty. He says but don't use that as an opportunity for the flesh. Now you see Paul they would accuse Paul because Paul says no the law is not the solution.

The law doesn't have any bearing on your relationship with God. They would then turn around and accuse Paul of saying basically that that it didn't matter how you live. God doesn't care.

You can you know you're not under any restrictions. It's known as antinomianism. Lawlessness.

And they would accuse Paul of preaching lawlessness. But that's not what he's preaching. He says God has called you to liberty.

Not so you could take your liberty and use it as an opportunity or as a cloak for sin. God has set us free from the guilt of sin. And he set us free from the bondage of sin.

Not so we could go out and sin more. But so we could serve him. That's the point that Paul is driving home.

And then he says for all the law is fulfilled in one word even this you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So in a sense Paul is saying okay look you guys want to keep the law I'll give you I'll give you some law to keep. Love your neighbor as yourself.

But then notice what he says but if you bite and devour one another beware lest you be consumed by one another. Now here's the irony when it comes to this whole thing of law and legalism. This is the the irony

and you see it over and over again historically.

You see it in the time of Jesus with the Pharisees. You see it throughout church history. You see it today.

The Pharisees you remember they were the ultimate law keepers. They were meticulous down to the smallest detail. But Jesus said this about them you strain out a gnat and you swallow a camel.

You see because on the one hand they're saying we're keeping the law. On the other hand they're saying we got to kill this guy. We got to get rid of this guy.

They're plotting to murder him and at the same time they're concerned about making sure they they weighed their little their herbs that they're offering to God. They're making sure that they weigh that out just perfectly and that's the way it always is with legalism. You strain out a gnat and you swallow a camel.

You're meticulous about these little things but when it comes to the real issues of true religion that people are clueless and and that's what happens with legalism. Legalism causes you it causes a person to major in the minors and to disregard the majors. That's what it does.

Jesus said you tithe mint and cumin and rue and you overlook the weightier matters of the law justice mercy and the love of God and that is true historically. It was true in the days of Jesus. It's true today.

When you find people that are wrapped up in legalistic religion under whatever banner it is you'll find that they are very meticulous about these little petty non-essential things but when it comes to the real issues of love and justice and things of that nature they just throw it all out the window. Remember the guy just a few months ago the Israelis assassinated this Islamic cleric. He was known as the spiritual leader for many of those the Hamas leader and the whole thing the papers.

Oh he was in a wheelchair and all of this the poor guy and so on. He would go to the mosque for prayers and then he would go plot to blow people up. This is a classic example of what religion does and we see it manifest in Islam.

We've seen it in church history. We've seen it with the Inquisition. We've seen it with all the persecutions that came by church leaders against true believers or the pogroms against the Jews.

All of this stuff in the name of religion. So we bless God on the one hand and we slit your throat with the other praising God all the while but that's that's what it comes down to. And to this very day you find that in many churches you will find this where there's a heavy legalistic emphasis you know maybe on the way you dress or you know how much money you're supposed to give or you know all the different kinds of things that that come along with some of the the groups today.

You'll find that people are very very adamant about certain kinds of things. You know oh no I would never wear that. Oh no are you kidding? I couldn't put makeup on or you know nothing like that but they don't have any qualms at all about gossiping about people.

They don't have any qualms at all about all kinds of compromised and carnal kinds of activities. But see this is the curse of religion because religion is is all connected to the flesh and the flesh is just corrupt. And in the end the corruption of the flesh always will rise to the surface.

And that's what Paul is going to address now. He says I say then walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. See Paul is saying look it's not about these rules and regulations and this legalistic

system that you're adhering to.

It's not about that. It's about a walk in the spirit. It's about a life in the spirit.

And you know religion we oftentimes we say you know we're not into religion we're into relationship and that's true but I want to define religion. Religion is basically legal and that's that's more or less the essence of it. It's legal.

It's a it's a system it's a legal system of some sort by which you obtain God's favor. But that's not what New Testament Christianity is. Christianity is a walk in the spirit a life in the spirit.

God is interested in fruit. He's not interested in works. He's not interested in the factory.

He's interested in the garden. He's not interested in some synthetic product that man can develop. He's interested in something natural that flows out of just a loving relationship with him.

And that's what Paul goes on to really describe here. But he says for the flesh lust 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 but if you are led by the spirit you are not under the law. So here's where Paul describes this battle that every one of us as Christians know by experience.

This is a unique experience to the Christian. The non-Christian doesn't have this battle because the non-Christian doesn't possess two natures. A Christian is a person who actually possesses two natures.

Because you're a Christian you now have received the the divine nature. God has imparted his nature to you. But you still live with your original nature.

Your fallen nature. And because you have both the fallen nature and the the nature of God there's a conflict that goes on inside of us. And we know the battle.

And the flesh is warring against the spirit. The flesh is always wanting to suppress the spirit and dominate and rule. But likewise the spirit is wanting to suppress the flesh and dominate and rule.

And how do we make sure that we're walking in the spirit? Well we've got to put the emphasis on the spirit. If we feed the spirit. If we develop the spirit.

If we put the emphasis on the spirit then we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But if I feed the flesh then the flesh will dominate and I will fulfill the lust of the flesh. And now the works of the flesh are evident.

And he goes on here to give us a list. The works of the flesh he says are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outburst of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like. And the like.

He's not it's not an exhaustive list. There's other things but he says this is this will get my point across. You see this is the flesh.

What what Paul is really showing us here is the same thing that Jesus told us. Remember what Jesus said? He said it's out of the heart of man that evil proceeds. It's not what goes into a man that defiles him.

It's what comes out of him that defiles him. Because out of the heart of man proceed and then he went on with his list which is similar to this one. But you see what Paul is saying is that God does not want us

walking in the flesh.

He doesn't want us operating in the flesh. He doesn't want us trying to approach him through the flesh because this is what the flesh is really consisting of. And all of this stuff is unacceptable to God.

You see God requires that we live in the spirit. That's what's acceptable to him. Now real quickly just a few of these things.

Adultery I think we're all familiar with what that is. Fornication just for your information. This is a word that includes all forms of sexual behavior outside of the marriage bond.

Outside of the relationship between husband and wife. All forms of sexual activity outside of that are under the category of fornication. They're prohibited.

All sex apart from within the context of marriage is prohibited by God. Now this was something that really the Christian faith introduced to the world for the most part. Because the world the apostles went into from the sexual point of view was very similar to the world that we are living in today.

There was not any particular sense that there was anything like sexual immorality. All sexuality was just part of life and nature and there were no taboos really or restrictions. And Christianity comes and introduces this whole new standard.

And now amazingly it's been 2,000 years. And for 2,000 years that standard has pretty much been the standard worldwide. But that standard is being reversed.

It's read in the news this week. You know I can't believe this is in the news. Huge news coming out of France.

First gay marriage takes place in France. I mean I just read that and think that's newsworthy? Give me a break. But that's part of the whole agenda.

The reversal. Bringing the world back to its heathenism, its paganism. Ridding the world of the Christian influence.

That's what's going on today. That's the attempt that's being made. Then there's uncleanness and lewdness.

The word lewdness is a word that refers to ready for any pleasure. It refers to shameless activity. A person who is without inhibition.

A person who no longer blushes when they ought to blush. But it's been the case before and it is the case again. And then he goes on with idolatry.

And then sorcery. Pharmakia. The Greek word.

The use of drugs recreationally. It's a funny thought to think of recreational drugs. That's the way people refer to them.

You're going out for some recreation this weekend, you know. Are you going to go down and shoot some baskets? No, we're going to just go smoke some dope and you know. That's the way it is, isn't it? But it's sorcery.

It's witchcraft. Hey, you want to get in touch with the devil? Drugs are a real quick way to do it. I don't advise it, but that's always been the case.

And so Paul goes on with this list and we don't have time to go into any more detail on it, but he says this, which I told you before, just as I also, 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. Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another or envying one another. You see, God is looking for fruit, the fruit of the spirit.

And again, as we close, remember this, whenever we step into the realm of works, we're stepping over into this area of all kinds of things that are unacceptable to God. But notice the diversity in the list. I mean, we've got adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, sorcery, all of us, of course.

But notice outburst of wrath, contentions, jealousy, selfish ambitions. But you see, it's all the same thing. And basically what Paul is saying is, look, the flesh and any endeavor in the flesh basically sets you outside of being able to please God.

You can't please God when you're in the flesh. Paul said that in Romans 8, those that are in the flesh cannot please God. It's an impossibility because this is the crud that's inside of us all.

And any attempt to please or approach or seek the favor of God through the flesh, this is what God sees. He sees all this crud in us, and it's unacceptable. God's looking for fruit.

And that's the contrast. Contrast the factory with the garden, contrast a synthetic product with that natural, beautiful, luscious fruit that comes forth. That's what God is looking for.

And Paul says, if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. You see, here's the reality. If we are Christians, we do live in the spirit.

But the problem is we don't always walk in the spirit. But Paul saying, look, if we live in the spirit, let's walk in the spirit too. And that's what we all need to be doing.

We need to be walking in the spirit. And walking in the spirit means that we have a lifestyle that is in the spirit, that my life is taken up with spiritual things, not with the things that catered to my lower nature. Because those that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If so be that the spirit of Christ dwells in you. And if Christ does not dwell in you, then you do not belong to him.

You see, it's all a matter of receiving Christ by faith, being born of the spirit and then living and walking in the spirit. And as we do that. We please God.

God is delighted with that. And the fruit of the spirit is born. In our lives and comes from our lives.

And that's a delight to God. And it's a delight to God's people as well. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for the encouragement that we receive from your word. Lord. And Lord, we thank you that you have made salvation sure and certain, not basing it upon our ability to perform some great thing.

But Lord, basing it upon your performance upon the cross and our receiving that. And Lord, we do receive that tonight. And in Jesus name, Lord, help us to walk in the spirit.

That we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. And Lord, for anyone that's with us tonight, that would perhaps be practicing the things that we read about here in this list that you said would keep people out of your kingdom. I pray that they would turn away from those things because you said that those that are yours have crucified the flesh.

And Lord, may that be so in Jesus name. Amen.

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