

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 15
Galatians 5: 16 - 26

The Secret Of The Christian Life

One of the best ways to illustrate something is by contrast. Paul uses this method in this portion of Scripture. He speaks of Spirit in contrast to the flesh, of freedom in contrast to law and he gives a whole list of man's evils against the beauty of the fruits of the Spirit. He shows that the nature of man is earthly and that God's man is holy. He tells us to "walk in the Spirit" and then tells us that if we do, we "will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Paul describes the warfare between the two natures, the one natural, the other, spiritual. Inherently, the Spirit is in opposition to the desires of the flesh because they are opposed to each other by nature. This war is old and powerful. It affects people, nations and principalities. It can be illustrated in the children Rebecca carried. They warred against each other even before they were born. One of those children represented the natural man, while the other represented the spiritual man (Gen. 25:22).

The battle that goes on in a believer often bewilders and disturbs him. In some cases it leads that person to cry out against the struggle. In this warfare some believers may doubt their salvation, and begin to deny their conversion experience, they act like those in the world and those they live with will call them hypocrites. This is not as strange as it seems, for this very thing is an evidence of the two natures indwelling a person. The new Christians do not know how to handle this and the struggle continues. They do not recognize the deliverance that God has provided to relieve them from this warfare. The war goes on and it is quite natural to take up the law. This leads to further frustration and confusion. The law condemns, thus making the wavering believers even more conscious of their sins. "Oh wretched man that I am." Cried Paul. "What am I to do?" Cries the unhappy backslidden believer. The remedy is plain: "Walk in the Spirit" and you will not yield to those wicked desires in your heart. Do you believe you were born with a nature to sin? Yes, the prophets of old say this is so. Many of God's chosen people listened to their old nature and paid a terrible price as an aftermath of sin. It was the serpent who deceived Eve; did Eve deceive Adam? Abraham and Sarah deceived the Egyptian ruler; Jacob deceived Isaac with the help of his mother,. Yes, there are many instances of the wicked heart in the Bible.

Man is flesh and it is LUST that gives the flesh its character! It is as though the flesh is infected with a terrible disease called, "I want." The flesh cannot be satisfied; the more it gets the more it wants. In reality this is the craving of an unsatisfied heart of flesh for the God who created it. It is this old sinful nature that must be put to death, but which remains to torment and destroy all spiritual intent and purpose.

Paul dealt with this warfare over and over. Romans Chapter 7 is called "The 'I' Disease" Chapter. It is the account of Paul's struggle against the inner enemy. It finally ends with his being able to understand his position with Christ and the meaning of Christ's death for him. Then the enemy was no longer able to control, but was kept under control by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here we have the same message Paul gave to the Galatians; he said, "I have been crucified with Christ." He meant he had died with Christ. You may ask, "How can this be?" The answer is in the purpose of Christ's death, His dying to remove the curse of sin. When Christ died, every sinner died with Him..When He was raised up from the dead every sinner was raised up with Him. That means all sinners, past, present and future. This is a deep truth, because the sin problem has been dealt with. The sacrifice was made and God accepted it. It was credited to man's account as righteousness. With this understanding we can say with Paul, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." So all who receive Christ have His resource to combat sin. We have the power of

sonship, the promises of God, the precious love that carries us through all temptations and subtle wiles of the flesh. Praise God! Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to save us. He is our salvation! He is our constant companion and He is, above all else, our covenant with God! Oh! The glory of this knowledge!

The work of the flesh is appalling to the spiritual man. The fact that we live in a body of flesh gives the enemy an advantage. This knowledge can be fearsome and destructive to a weak Christian. Our society is sinking under the awful weight of the sins of immorality, impurity, idolatry, anger, enmity, envy, selfishness, strife, dissension, drunkenness, drugs, party spirit and much more. Paul threw a barb at the ones who had led his beloved Galatians astray by saying, in v. 18, "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law." This actually points out the fact that the law is the means by which the flesh has license to produce lawlessness. "But," he said, "if you are being controlled by the Spirit you wouldn't desire to do the things the law produces." The result of the law is just the opposite of its purpose.

During the late 19th and early 20th Century, God inspired many men to write great truths. There were theologians such as Ironsides, Spurgeon, Grant, Murray, Chambers, Henry, Simpson, Meyer, Calvin and many, many more who wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many of these men wrote about what Paul told the Galatians. It doesn't seem possible that they could write with any knowledge of the evil we have today, but they did. They didn't experience TV, X-rated movies, pornography or the life-style that says divorce is not a problem, let alone a sin. There doesn't seem to be any answer to evil and its escalation at such a terrible rate. For the Christian there are answers in God's Word. God tells us exactly where we are, what we are and what is going to happen. He also tells us what we can do when man's lust and greed are in control. God says in 2 Chr. 7:14, "If my People, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land." Do you see how we can turn the tide of evil? Do you believe God is interested? 2 Chr. 7:15 tells us He is. He said, "Now my eyes shall be open, , and my ears attentive unto the prayers offered in this place." God is a holy God. Evil shall not come into His presence nor into His kingdom. Who, then, will enter?— Those who have the Spirit of holiness and righteousness will be the ones to enter into His presence.

While we are here in this life in the flesh, we must be vigilant because the enemy is always present. He tries hard to make us believe he owns our house, that is , our bodies and minds. They become weak, need repair, get sick and grow old. God says, "Stand off! Stay back! My Son lives therein and that body is my Holy Temple!" So God shows us how to fight this battle. We are to put on the whole armor of God and stand firmly. Yes, stand in the liberty Christ's death and resurrection have bought. This is the secret of the Christian life. This is the secret weapon we have. Whoever appropriates to himself Christ's death upon the cross regards the flesh of himself as put to death. Those of us who allow the Spirit of God to control us will be able to sing and rejoice. We will show the world the walk of faith, the secret of the Christian life!

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SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“The Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17)

Relax your body. Bring your thoughts into focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Begin by claiming God’s promise of freedom. What should you give to Jesus that will make you free? Is it fear of the future, of being a failure, of frustration at not being able to control some habit? Does resentment or bitterness torment you? Tell the Lord what is troubling you, for He is here, He cares. Speak to Him and in turn, listen. Ask Him to speak to you as you do your lesson. Ask Him to help you have victory where you see only defeat. Tell Jesus you love Him, that you are thankful for His Holy Spirit within. Say it over several times; “Lord Jesus, I know I can have freedom in the Spirit, because You have promised it to me. I thank you for your gift of eternal life, resurrection power over my sin and that I am God’s child through Your death on the cross FOR ME!”

QUESTIONS: Suggestion, use as many translations as possible for your reference reading.

1. What is Paul’s advice in v. 16?
2. What does Paul say happens when you take his advice given in v. 16?
3. How had the Galatians been ensnared? Gal. 2:4.
4. What is the battle described in v. 17?
5.
 - a. How can you avoid being under the law?
 - b. Can you give an illustration in your life where you know you have done what it says in v. 18? Please share with the class or tell this experience to a friend or relative.
6. Give the list of works of the flesh. vv. _____
7.
 - a. Give the contrasting list given by Paul.
 - b. Tell what happens when a person becomes a Christian and he determines to have the list of spiritual responses active in his life.

8.
 - a. What does Rom. 8:10 tell you that confirms your position in God's family?
 - b. How can this confirmation help to win over temptations to sin?
 - c. In the light of Philippians 4:13, tell what the knowledge of Christ's life within you means to you.
9. Read Rom. 8:13 and tell how it confirms the warning in Gal. 5:21.
10. What does Paul say to the Colossians to "put off" in Col. 3:8,9?
11.
 - a. Read Col. 3:10 - 17 at least 5 times this week. After thoroughly studying the passage tell what is the most important part of the message and how you can appropriate it in your life.
 - b. Tell how you think Paul's instructions in Col. 3:10 - 17 can produce the fruit of the Spirit in believers.
12.
 - a. What did Paul write to the Ephesians, (Eph. 6:11 - 18), that shows how to defeat the enemy?
 - b. Paul writes about the use of weapons in spiritual warfare in 2 Cor. 10:4,5. Tell how this can help you.
13. What does it mean to crucify the flesh in Gal. 5:24?
14.
 - a. How does Eph. 2:3 describe our unregenerate (fleshly) life?
 - b. Do you see how your life in the flesh has been crucified? Tell how.
 - c. Give illustrations of "desires of the body" and "desires of the mind."
 - d. What does Rom. 8:1 say that gives great joy and peace to God's children? Express your personal response to this verse.
15.
 - a. Write out Gal. 6:25 in your own words.
 - b. What does Rom. 8:3 say Christ did that we might walk in the Spirit?
 - c. What does Rom 8:4 tell you about the requirement of the law?
 - d. What mind-set should every Christian have as laid out in Rom. 8:5 and the ultimate result of each as found in v. 6?
16. Select a verse from any of the lesson's Scripture references; tell why it is important to you by sharing its effect on your life.