

**Scripture Reference: Galatians 5:17-25**

**Date: October 20, 2013**

**Title: "...The Flesh..."**

**Focus:** The corrupting influence of our own desires. (Series 2 of 3)

**Intro:**

1. Let's be honest, we are our own source of frustration and pain even though we do not like to admit this.
2. To embrace this we would need to do something about it. It is much easier to blame someone or something else.
3. However, God is realistic about the situation and in His love He reveals truth that we would not live deluded lives.

**Body:**

### **A Spiritual Dynamic (vv. 17-18)**

Early discipleship was heavily influenced by Judaism. Which makes sense. Judaism was their experience before coming to faith in Jesus.

As a result, many believers continued in their old practices and understood a relationship with God in OT terms (obedience to the laws and following the teachings of the rabbis).

In an attempt to help them understand what "*the grace of Christ*" (1:6), accomplished, Paul shared with the Galatians His own conversion and how he came to understand that "*a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified*" (2:16).

The revelation to Paul that a person is right with God because of Jesus (His death, burial, and resurrection) and nothing else is the Gospel message (Galatians 1:6-9).

But, the Gospel contends with the continuing efforts of people to work to be pleasing in God's sight. This Paul referred to as "*another Gospel*."

As a result, a dynamic was created in the lives of the Galatians. They were trying to follow the Spirit by behaving in a certain manner (the flesh). About this dynamic Paul was direct and clear.

vv. 17-18; "*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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*"

For the Galatians, to try to keep The Law would work against following the Holy Spirit. Following the Holy Spirit would work against keeping The Law. If they tried to please God by keeping following The Law, they would be disappointed.

The two are diametrically opposed, working against one another.

## **What did Paul Mean by "The Flesh"?**

The "*flesh*" represents the wishes, efforts, and perspective associated with our natural, physical selves.

It is what we want because we are hungry, tired, angry, happy, jealous, etc..

It is what we try to do based on our own natural understanding of things.

It is the way we understand the world based on what we can see, and that alone.

It is behaving solely on the basis of who we are. That is not to say that everything done from the flesh is bad. But, since it is grounded in our humanity alone, there is nothing eternal or godly about it.

What results from living in the dominance of the flesh?

*vv. 19-21; "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."*

One whose life is directed by himself alone cannot rightly say he has been born into a life from above.

v. 21b; *"I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

This is not a warning about losing salvation if a person does these things. It is a warning that those who live this way, no matter how good a person she may be, does not possess a relationship with God.

**Instead, Acceptance of the Gospel leads a Person to be "led by the Spirit."**

What did Paul mean by this? Being a Christian is not about living according to rules, any rules.

v. 18; *"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."*

Instead, what you do, how you think, how you behave, everything you do are, is the result of what you sincerely believe God is directing you to do.

Romans 14:22-23; *"The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin."*

But, if we don't live according to some rule (whose rules would be my question - even God's rule, The Law, Paul didn't believe was acceptable) won't we do whatever we want and end up in sin.

No, because we are not "doing whatever we want." We are being led, as best we understand, by the Spirit of God.

What results when the Holy Spirit has dominance?

*vv. 22-25; "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

**Closing:**

1. Being a follower of Jesus is not measured by what you do or how well you follow the tenants of the Christian faith.
2. Being a follower of Jesus exists only if you follow Jesus.
3. Are you following Jesus or are you following something else?