

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
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Galatians 5.18-6.18

Turn with me if you would back to the book of Galatians and chapter 5 and we're going to begin where we left off last week at verse 18 and Lord willing to the end of this letter which Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia.

And since I'm not going to be very long tonight, let's just read this section and then we'll come back and I'll explain it a few verses at a time.

Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of 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.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 6:1, Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! 12 As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

17 From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Let's pray.

Most of us probably know a number of people who when we see them, we recognize their face, but we have no idea what their name is.

Now, if you were trying to describe that person to a friend; how would you describe them?

You might say something like, "Hey guess who I saw the other day? And your friend would say, who?

And you would say, "Well, I don't know their name, but they go to our church. And they sit so on the left side toward the middle; and they have three children, and she has short brown hair and wears glasses and she's really quiet; and her husband is really tall and he's almost bald and he's really outgoing.

And because you didn't know their name, you would describe their gender and their physical features and their family affiliations, and more than likely you'd include a little something about their personality or character.

And the point I'm trying to make is this. It's not just our physical features, or our ethnicity, or our marital status that truly defines who we are. Who we are, also includes our personality and our character.

And here in Galatians chapter 5, the apostle Paul is describing the character of a Christian and the subsequent actions that flow from being a Christian.

And he starts off in verse 18 and he says,

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

And so the first characteristic of a believer is that he will be “led by the Spirit.” And if you are led by the Spirit, then you’re not under the law.”

Now, the word for “if” here in the original Greek could also be translated “since.”

In other words, “Since you are being led by the Spirit,” you have now been freed from slavery to the law! And now you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And as believers in Christ, that’s who we are!

But now, what does that look like in your life?

Well, most importantly it means that as a Christian, we will avoid the quote, “works of the flesh.” And Paul lists some of them here in verse 19. In fact, he gets pretty specific in what these works of the flesh or desires of the flesh entail. And here he gives us a list of fifteen.

Now, the first three, mentioned here in verse 19, are forbidden sexual matters: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality.”

Now the Greek word for “Immorality” here, is the word pornea. It’s where we get the word pornography. And it’s a general term for illicit sexual involvement, which of course, could be any number of sexual sins.

The next word, translated “impurity,” includes all kinds of immoral thoughts or fantasies; and then the word for “sensuality” refers to a general lack of restraint when it comes to sexual matters.

But the most important thing to note here, is that none of these works of the flesh describe the lifestyle of a genuine Christian.

And then in verse 20, Paul's list turns to some forbidden religious matters. For instance, he forbids "idolatry" and "sorcery." Idolatry, as we all know, is to worship anything other than God. And today that can include a great number of things, ranging from nature, to the universe, to money, to power, to many other dark and evil desires.

And a lot of people look to nature and to the universe for answers to life. Hoping that somehow the stars will "align" and give them what they desire. But that's idolatry to look anywhere but to God!.

And then he mentions sorcery. And the Greek word for "sorcery" is pharmakeia, which refers to the use of drugs. And we get our word pharmacy—or the drugstore—from it. But back in Paul's day, it more commonly referred to magical powers or the use of magic.

And then the next group of sinful works are forbidden relational matters. Paul adds to this list of sins, the word "enmity," which is hatred; which leads to the next word, which is "strife."

King Solomon wrote this about those two sins **Proverbs 10:12. He wrote, "Hatred stirs up strife".**

The word, "strife" means disunity, or discord, a sin that has destroyed many families, including many church families. Disunity and discord, there's nothing worse among Christians and there's no place for it.

The next word is "jealousy," which is the cause many times of disunity and discord. And this refers to a selfish desire for personal promotion. And we see this all the time in the church. People serving, not for the glory of God or for the good of their church, but rather for their own glory, to ink their own horn and bring attention to themselves.

Listen, whatever we're called to do in the kingdom: it's not about us! It's all about Jesus and lifting up the name of Jesus and getting glory for Him!

Then Paul mentions “fits of anger,” which could be the result of some selfish person not getting the attention they want—or not getting their way—and it results in this sudden outburst of anger. And somebody might try and justify their anger and say, “Well, that’s just the way I am. I just have a bad temper, but I get over it as quick as it happens.

Well, nuclear bomb explosions don’t last long either, but the results can still be very devastating. And so we should never try and justify or make excuses for our fits of anger. There’s no place for it in the church or in a Christian household.

The next three words in this list here in verse 20—“rivalries, dissensions, divisions”—have an obvious connection. These interpersonal sins literally destroy relationships. And again, selfish competition and conflict and division can tear a church or a family apart.

And then Paul adds the word “envy” in verse 21. This word refers to someone becoming displeased that someone else has something he or she wants. And again, this has no place in the church.

Paul then wraps up this list by noting two more sinful acts here in verse 21: “drunkenness” and “orgies.” And they’re paired together for a reason. And the reason is because they typically go hand in hand.

Now, this list of forbidden sins is by no means, exhaustive. In fact, we could add many more sins to this list ourselves. But this list does give us a pretty good picture of sin. And just think, if all this was going on in the first century, then you can be sure that today it’s only gotten worse.

In fact, today, most people wouldn't think twice about the sins we just mentioned, much less blush at any of them. Devious sexual sins and disunity and strife and envy and jealousy and bad tempers, these are all common place sins today. And many people excuse them, and say, "Well, that's just the way it is today or that's just the we are today."

But here's what God's Word has to say about that in verse 21: **"Those who do such things, he says, will not inherit the kingdom of God."**

And though that may be a shocking statement to some people: when you really think about God and His holiness and what He's done for us to cover our sins, then that statement becomes much more believable. People who commit these sins are not going to heaven—period.

Now, again, that doesn't mean that those who do such things are beyond the hope of salvation. But what Paul means is that those whose lives are **characterized** by these sins, are not going to heaven, because they're giving evidence that they are not believers.

Listen, you and I both know that Christians can sin just as badly as anybody else, but here's the difference: an unbeliever can't wait to do it again, whereas a Christian can't wait to pray and ask forgiveness and repent of their sin. In other words, they're truly bothered with their sin and ashamed of their sin.

Unbelievers live by this list of sinful deeds everyday, but a believer wants to live by another list of deeds.

And Paul gives us that list in verses 22-23: He says,

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

And this “fruit” is the work of the Holy Spirit. It’s not a work that we can do in our own strength or power. We may have the ability to do **some** of these things in our own strength at certain times in our life, but we’ll never reflect all of these characteristics or all of these character traits consistently in our own power.

Now notice something here: This is not a list of the **fruits** of the Spirit. The singular form of the word fruit is used here. This is the **fruit** of the Spirit. All these qualities are unified—which means they all together make up one fruit. They consist of nine different elements but they make up one fruit. You could think of it like a cluster of grapes with nine grapes, which make up one fruit.

And that’s important, because you can’t just decide to work on mastering kindness and then plan to work on patience later. No, all nine of these work together at the same time as the Spirit of God develops this Christlike character in you. And by the way, this is a life long process. We’re all a work in progress until the day we transfer from this life to life in heaven.

Now, the first grape in the cluster is love. And this is the Greek word (agapē). And this kind of love seeks what is best for others. And it seeks what is best for others, whether they respond or not.

And then the next grape is “joy”. And “joy” does not describe happiness as in “outward happiness”, but rather an inward contentment that is totally unrelated to the circumstances of life. And I have witnessed that joy many times from people who were suffering greatly from life’s circumstances—but still they display the joy of God in their hearts as they surrender to the Spirit of God.

When I think about suffering and the joy of God, I always think about Joni (Johnny) Erickson.

Joni today, is a conference speaker and Bible teacher and she has a radio program that airs all over the world everyday and a wheelchair ministry and several other ministries and she lives a very active and joyful life for the Lord.

And if you didn't know her story and you just heard her speak on the radio, you probably wouldn't think twice about what she said. But when you find out that at the age of 17, while living a very active life riding horses, hiking, playing tennis, and swimming. On July 30, 1967, at the age of 17, Joni dove into the Chesapeake Bay. And because she had misjudged the shallowness of the water. She suffered a fracture in her spine and became a quadriplegic (or tetraplegic), and was paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Well, during her two years of extensive and painstaking rehabilitation, according to her autobiography, she experienced anger and depression. She wrote that she even had suicidal thoughts, and doubts about God.

But then later, during her occupational therapy, she learned to paint with a brush between her teeth, and then she began selling her artwork. She also learned to write in the same manner. And to this date, she's written over 40 books, recorded several musical albums, starred in an autobiographical movie of her life, and she is a powerful advocate for people with disabilities. And I could go on and on about all the ministries she has started and still leads.

And she would be the first to tell you, that she does none of this in her own power and strength, but only by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I've asked Allen to play a video for us. This is Johnny on one of her radio programs talking about another young lady who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Listen closely to what she says.

So Paul talks about love and joy and then he adds "peace," which is an inward calmness. One author said that this word describes someone who is confident that "God is too good to be unkind, and too wise to make a mistake."

And then next in this cluster of fruit is "patience." This word refers to bearing up under trials.

Next is the word "kindness," which refers to being gracious toward others, especially unbelievers. The Lord Jesus modeled this often in His earthly ministry.

Next in the cluster is "goodness," which emphasizes a spirit of generosity toward others.

And then Paul mentions the quality of "faithfulness". Faithfulness relates to someone who is convinced beyond all doubt, that God is the creator and the controller of life, and that conviction leads to perseverance.

And then in verse 23, Paul adds the characteristic of "gentleness." Your translation might render it "meekness." This word combines the idea of strength with gentleness. It was used in Paul's day to describe wild animals that had been tamed. They were still powerful, but they were now under control.

And so, being gentle does not mean that you are weak. Jesus was described as being gentle in Matthew 11:29 and also in 2 Corinthians 10:1, but Jesus wasn't weak. In fact, He was and still is, extremely and supremely powerful. Yet His power is always under control.

And then Paul concludes the list with “self-control.” This word refers to self-discipline in life.

So, how would the people who know you; best describe you? Which list would they associate you with? The list of forbidden sins, or this list, which is the fruit of the Spirit of God?

Well, the only way to make the answer to that question obvious to people is to walk in the Spirit. Because it’s only in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. It’s not something we can fake or do in our own strength.

And again, it goes back to the basics. It goes back to our prayer life and staying in the word and fellowshiping with other believers. And also serving and sharing with others the good news of Jesus.

Well, we’ll pick back up here next week Lord willing if you want to read ahead. We’ll begin with verse 25 and hopefully finish up next week.