

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 5 (PART 2)

WE HAVE SPOKEN A LOT ABOUT WHAT MAKES SOMEONE RIGHT WITH GOD, WHAT SOMEONE MUST DO (OR NOT DO) IN ORDER TO BE "SAVED" OR CONSIDERED A CHOSEN, CHILD OF GOD. WE KNOW FOR SURE IT IS NOT THROUGH ADHERENCE TO THE LAW OF MOSES. IT'S NOT SOMETHING PHYSICAL OR OUTWARD EITHER (JEWISH LINEAGE OR CIRCUMCISION) THAT MARKS SOMEONE OUT AS A CHRISTIAN.

BUT AS WE DISCUSSED LAST TIME, THE DISCUSSION OF WHAT IT'S *NOT* DOESN'T MEAN THERE ISN'T SOMETHING THAT IT *IS*. HOW DO WE LIVE PLEASING TO GOD? WHAT'S OUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH SIN? WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THE TEMPTATIONS AND EVIL CRAVINGS THAT WE STILL FEEL AND EXPERIENCE? DOES HOLINESS MATTER? ARE THERE THINGS GOD IS LOOKING TO SEE IN OUR LIFE? AND IF SO, HOW DO WE MAKE THOSE THINGS HAPPEN? IS THIS SOMETHING GOD DOES? IS THIS SOMETHING WE DO? IF WE SIN AFTER BECOMING A CHRISTIAN, CAN WE "LOSE" OUR SALVATION? THESE ARE GOOD QUESTIONS THE GALATIANS WOULD HAVE BEEN ASKING AS THEY READ PAUL'S LETTER AND THEY ARE GOOD QUESTIONS FOR US TO CONSIDER AS WELL.

PAUL WROTE IN OUR PREVIOUS SECTION THAT IF A PERSON WANTED TO BE PLEASING TO GOD, OBEDIENT TO HIS WORD AND ON THE RIGHT TRACK, THE PATH THAT THAT PERSON SHOULD BE ON IS THE PATH OF LOVE. "FOR THE WHOLE LAW IS FULFILLED IN ONE WORD: YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" HE WROTE (5:14). HOW THEN DO WE FIND THIS PATH? HE WILL NOW INTRODUCE US TO THE PHRASE "WALKING BY THE SPIRIT." AND WITH THAT, WE'LL READ ON IN GALATIANS 5.

GALATIANS 5:16-18 - "WALK BY THE SPIRIT"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "WALK BY THE SPIRIT" (5:16)? THE GREEK WORD FOR "WALK" IS περιπατέω (PERIPATEO) AND IT IS "A COMMON NEW TESTAMENT IDIOM FOR HOW ONE CONDUCTS ONE'S LIFE OR HOW ONE BEHAVES" (NET BIBLE NOTE, GAL 5:16). IT IMPLIES MOVEMENT AND DIRECTION. WE ARE TO BE MOVED AND EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ALSO TAKE ACTIVE STEPS AND MAKE INTENTIONAL CHOICES WHICH ARE IN LINE WITH GOD'S WORD RATHER THAN WHAT THE WORLD SAYS OR OUR OWN EVIL CRAVINGS WANT. TO WALK OR BE LED BY THE SPIRIT IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING "FOLLOWING JESUS" WHO SHOWS US "THE WAY" WE WALK AND LIVE. JESUS SAID:

JOHN 6:63 - "IT IS THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE; THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING; THE WORDS THAT I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU ARE SPIRIT AND ARE LIFE.

SO FOLLOWING HIS TEACHING AND EXAMPLE, WE ARE WALKING THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT AND LIFE. THE LANGUAGE PAUL USES IN THIS SECTION INDICATES THIS IS AN ONGOING PROCESS "IF YOU ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT..." IS IN THE PRESENT TENSE, MEANING "IF YOU ARE BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT" AND NOT A ONE TIME THING THAT JUST HAPPENS.

PAUL TELLS US THAT BY WALKING BY THE SPIRIT, WE WILL NOT "CARRY OUT THE DESIRE OF THE FLESH". PAUL SETS TWO FORCES AGAINST EACH OTHER IN THIS CHAPTER: "THE SPIRIT" AND "THE FLESH". THEY ARE IN "OPPOSITION" (V. 17) TO ONE ANOTHER. THE USAGE OF "FLESH" BY PAUL IS A SUMMARY WORD WHICH MEANS THE EVIL CRAVINGS OF OUR OWN SOULS, THE WAYS OF THIS EVIL AND BROKEN WORLD AND JUST THE GENERAL DESIRE TO DO WHAT WE WANT RATHER THAN WHAT GOD WANTS. THE "FLESH" IS NOT THE SAME AS THE DEVIL. THE DEVIL IS AN EXTERNAL FORCE TEMPTING AND PULLING YOU AWAY FROM GOD - THE FLESH IS SOMETHING INTERNAL THAT MUST BE MASTERED/KILLED AND THAT IS EMBEDDED IN OUR HUMAN WIRING AND MUST BE DEACTIVATED AND REPLACED! ALL OF THOSE CONCEPTS ARE BUILT INTO THIS WORD "FLESH".

OUR DEFAULT SETTING FROM BIRTH IS "THE FLESH". PAUL WILL LATER WRITE TO THE ROMANS: "AND THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD (ROMANS 8:8)." THROUGH PRACTICING THE WAY OF JESUS FAITHFULLY EACH DAY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE WILL SEE OUR "DEFAULTS" BEGIN TO CHANGE. GUIDED BY GOD'S WORD WE ~~WILL~~ (NOT MIGHT) SEE OUR DESIRES CHANGED, OUR THOUGHTS CHANGED, OUR BEHAVIORS CHANGED. THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD - AND THE SPIRIT COMES TO THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD AND BELIEVED THE GOSPEL, REPENTED AND BEEN BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST - A SHORTHAND FORMULA FOR THE INITIAL CONVERSION OF A BELIEVER. ONE SHOULD KNOW THAT THE SPIRIT IS ALIVE INSIDE OF THEM - PERHAPS NOT ALWAYS IN A SINGLE MOMENT OF TIME, BUT AFTER AN HONEST EVALUATION OF CHANGE.

ONE FINAL SIDE NOTE OF THIS LENGTHY INTRODUCTION: IF YOU ARE UNSURE IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT, ASK GOD TO GIVE YOU HIS SPIRIT AS A GIFT. (SEE LUKE 11:5-13). A CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE MUST RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT IF THEY ARE TO TRULY BE A CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE. BELIEVING DOCTRINES OR KNOWING THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY DOES NOT HAVE POWER TO TRANSFORM A HEART OR LIFE. IT IS A MARK OF A DISCIPLE TO BE HONEST AND HUMBLE ON THIS ISSUE (ACTS 19:1-7).

SO WHAT SHOULD BE THE EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN? PAUL WILL GIVE US SOME INSIGHT TO THIS NEXT.

GALATIANS 5:19-21 - THE "DEEDS OF THE FLESH"

HOW DO YOU KNOW AND RECOGNIZE THAT YOUR FLESH IS LEADING YOUR LIFE? PAUL BEGINS TO LIST SOME IDENTIFIERS. HE USES THE PHRASE "DEEDS" OF THE FLESH (IN CONTRAST TO THE "FRUIT" OF THE SPIRIT LISTED IN THE NEXT SECTION) AS A WAY OF HIGHLIGHTING THESE ARE THINGS YOU ARE *DOING* AS YOU ALLOW THE FLESH TO LEAD YOUR LIFE. FRUIT GROWS OVER TIME, AS NEW LIFE IS PRODUCED INSIDE OF YOU. DEEDS/WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE YOU MAKING THE CHOICE TO FOLLOW YOUR OWN LEAD AND ACT IN THIS WAY.

SO WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE "DEEDS" THAT WE SHOULD BE WATCHFUL FOR? HERE'S THE LIST PAUL GIVES US, WHICH A COLLECTION OF DEFINITIONS FOR EACH:

IMMORALITY — SEXUAL RELATIONS OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE, FANTASY

IMPURITY — INVOLVED IN UNHOLY THINGS, THINKING LUSTFUL THOUGHTS

SENSUALITY — LUSTFUL PLEASURES, SEXUALLY MINDED, TRYING TO GET OTHER'S ATTENTION, DEVOTED TO GRATIFYING MY SENSES.

IDOLATRY — PUTTING ANYTHING BEFORE OR NEXT TO GOD. ANY OTHER #1 PRIORITY, DEVOTION TO IDOLS

SORCERY — WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC, PSYCHICS, FORTUNE TELLERS, CONSULTING ANY OTHER SOURCE THAN GOD SPIRITUALLY

ENMITIES — MAKING ENEMIES WITH PEOPLE, BEING HOSTILE, ILL WILLED, WISHING OTHERS GO THROUGH MISFORTUNE

STRIFE — MAKING THINGS TENSE OR DIFFICULT, QUARRELING, ARGUING, FIGHTING

JEALOUSY — DESIRING WHAT OTHERS HAVE, WISHING TO BE SOMEONE ELSE

OUTBURSTS OF ANGER - YELLING, THROWING FIT, LOSING IT, CURSING, HITTING, RAGE, SLAMMING DOOR

DISPUTES — RIVALRY, KEEPING SCORE, ARGUING WITH PEOPLE, IGNORING PEOPLE, BEING ANTAGONISTIC, UNWILLING TO FORGIVE OR YIELD. WANT TO KEEP THE FIGHT OR TENSION, SELFISH AMBITION

DISSENSIONS — WITHDRAWING YOURSELF, NOT BEING A PART OF THE FAMILY, ISOLATING YOURSELF, BEING PARTISAN

FACTIONS — SEPARATING, KEEPING YOURSELF FROM OTHERS BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER, A PARTY OR GROUP THAT IS CONTENTIOUS OR SELF-SEEKING, CLIQUES, "FEELING EVERYONE IS WRONG EXCEPT THOSE IN YOUR OWN LITTLE GROUP",

ENVYING — NOT BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU SEE WHAT OTHERS HAVE, LONGING AFTER OTHER'S THINGS, COVETING, RESENTFUL OF WHAT OTHERS HAVE OR WHEN GOOD HAPPENS TO THEM. "WHY DOES THAT NEVER HAPPEN TO ME?", PAINFUL OR RESENTFUL AWARENESS OF AN ADVANTAGE ENJOYED BY ANOTHER JOINED WITH A DESIRE TO POSSESS THE SAME ADVANTAGE

DRUNKENNESS — DRINKING TO GET DRUNK, BEING DRUNK.

CAROUSING — PARTYING, CLUBBING,

AND THINGS LIKE THESE — MURDER, ADULTERY, DISOBEYING PARENTS, LYING, GOSSIPING, STEALING, ETC

AND THEN TO POWERFULLY CONCLUDE THIS CONVERSATION, PAUL "*FOREWARNS*" THAT THOSE WHO "PRACTICE SUCH THINGS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD (V. 21)." IN OTHER WORDS, THESE ARE NOT THINGS TO MESS WITH. THESE ARE SERIOUS AND IMPORTANT THINGS TO WATCH FOR, REPENT OF AND NOT ALLOW TO BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR LIFE, HEART AND HOME.

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "PRACTICE" THESE THINGS? THE GREEK WORD MEANS "TO DO, OR MAKE A PRACTICE OF DOING" AND IMPLIES A HABIT OR PATTERN OF THESE THINGS BEING IN SOMEONE'S LIFE. HERE ARE SOME MORE DEFINITIONS TO HELP:

PRACTICE - TO DO (SOMETHING) REGULARLY OR CONSTANTLY AS AN ORDINARY PART OF YOUR LIFE

HABIT - A USUAL WAY OF BEHAVING : SOMETHING THAT A PERSON DOES OFTEN IN A REGULAR AND REPEATED WAY

I THINK IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THAT SOME OF THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH MAY BE PRACTICED NOT EVERY DAY, BUT UNDER CERTAIN SITUATIONS. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

ON A NORMAL DAY A MAN IS PEACEFUL, BUT WHEN STRESS FROM WORK COMES, THEY ARE PRONE TO STRIFE OR OUTBURST OF ANGER, ONE MIGHT WANT TO BE FOREWARNED THAT THAT IS A PRACTICE, EVEN IF ONLY WHEN STRESSED.

IF A WOMAN IS NORMALLY THANKFUL BUT WHEN AROUND A CERTAIN PERSON OR FAMILY MEMBER TENDS TO HAVE JEALOUSY, ENVY OR DISSENSION, THAT'S A HABIT/PRACTICE AS IT RELATES TO THAT RELATIONSHIP.

LASTLY IF YOU TYPICALLY TRUST GOD, PRAY AND PRACTICE GRATITUDE, BUT DURING TIMES OF ANXIETY OR UNCERTAINTY LOOK TO A HOROSCOPE, MAGIC, MYSTICAL ARTS/AUTHORS BECAUSE GOD SEEMS QUIET, THAT'S SOMETHING TO REPENT OF. IF YOU GET DRUNK, SMOKE POT, OR EAT A WEDDING CAKE TO "TAKE THE EDGE OFF" WHEN LIFE IS TOO MUCH, THAT'S IDOLATRY. YOU MAY NOT DO IT EVERY DAY, BUT IF THIS IS THE PLACE/PERSON/BEHAVIOR YOU GO IN THESE PATTERNED EXAMPLES, THESE DEEDS OF THE FLESH MAY BE MORE OF A HABIT THAN YOU THINK.

LASTLY, IN OUR MODERN AGE I THINK IT IS WORTH SAYING ONE MORE THING. MANY CHRISTIANS DON'T "PRACTICE" SOME OF THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH FIRST HAND AND SO WE FEEL EXEMPT FROM THESE WARNINGS. HOWEVER, WE OUGHT TO CONSIDER HOW WE ARE PARTICIPATING IN THESE EVIL DEEDS VIRTUALLY, VISUALLY AND IN RELATION TO OUR ENTERTAINMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU LIKE *WATCHING* THINGS, EVEN IF YOU AREN'T *DOING* THESE THINGS, THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT. IF YOU AREN'T BOTHERED OR TROUBLED BY THE PROMOTION OF THESE THINGS

IN A TELEVISION SHOW OR ON THE INTERNET, YOUR FLESH HAS SEEPED INTO A PART OF YOUR HEART AND MORAL COMPASS THAT OUGHT TO BE RULED BY THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS 5:22-24 - THE "FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT"

WHY DOES PAUL USE THE IDEA OF FRUIT AS IT RELATES TO THE EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN OUR LIVES? FRUIT IS AN IDENTIFIER. YOU KNOW A TREE BY ITS FRUIT (LUKE 6:44). YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT WHEN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS BEING PRODUCED IN YOUR LIFE.

LOVE — CARE, CONCERN, COMPASSION, AFFECTION FOR OTHER PEOPLE AND GOD

JOY — EXPRESSING DELIGHT, HAPPINESS, GLADNESS, GENUINE SMILING, NOT SAD ALL OF THE TIME

PEACE — CALM, SETTLED, NOT ANXIOUS, AND ABLE TO REST, SERENITY

PATIENCE — LONGSUFFERING, "THE CAPACITY TO ACCEPT OR TOLERATE DELAY, TROUBLE OR SUFFERING WITHOUT GETTING ANGRY OR UPSET" (NOT PERFECT CIRCUMSTANCES IN YOUR LIFE), HAVING OR SHOWING PATIENCE IN SPITE OF TROUBLES, ESPECIALLY THOSE CAUSED BY OTHER PEOPLE.

KINDNESS — FRIENDLY, CONSIDERATE, DISPOSITION OF BEING NICE AND GENEROUS

GOODNESS — VIRTUOUS, MORALLY EXCELLENT, PURSUING WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT

FAITHFULNESS — CONSTANT, STEADFAST, LOYAL, TO GOD AND OTHERS. STICKING IT OUT.

GENTLENESS — GENTLE, TENDER HEARTED, CARING, MILD MANNERED, NOT VIOLENT OR HARSH (IN WORD OR ACTION).

SELF-CONTROL — NOT BEING CONTROLLED BY OTHER THINGS, ABLE TO DIRECT YOUR BEHAVIOR OR EMOTIONS, RESTRAINT EXERCISED OVER ONE'S OWN IMPULSES, EMOTIONS, OR DESIRES. THE ABILITY TO CONTROL ONESELF, IN PARTICULAR ONE'S EMOTIONS AND DESIRES OR THE EXPRESSION OF THEM IN ONE'S BEHAVIOR, ESPECIALLY IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES AND OUR OWN PROGRESSION IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, ISN'T JUST THE GRADUAL ABSENCE OF THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH, BUT IT ALSO THE BLOSSOMING AND ABUNDANCE OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. *NOT* GETTING DRUNK IS GOOD. BUT NOT MANIFESTING JOY IS NOT GOOD. WE WANT TO SEE ENVY AND JEALOUSY DIE AND PEACE AND SELF-CONTROL THRIVE. A QUIET PERSON ISN'T NECESSARILY PEACEFUL. A PERSON WHO DOESN'T HAVE AN OUTBURST OF ANGER ISN'T NECESSARILY LOVING.

THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO US OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE FRUIT GROWING IN OUR LIVES AS MUCH AS WE ALL CAN OBSERVE THE CHANGING OF THE SEASON FROM WINTER TO SPRING AND SPRING TO HARVEST TIME.

REMEMBER, JESUS IN HIS FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING COURSE (THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT) SAYS THAT WE WILL KNOW A "*TREE BY ITS FRUIT*" (MATTHEW 7:15-20)." FRUIT DOESN'T GROW OR APPEAR OVERNIGHT. THERE IS A PROCESS OF PREPARING THE SOIL, PLANTING, CULTIVATION, AND GROWTH THAT IS INVOLVED TO SEE FRUIT. AT THE SAME TIME, ONE MISSED DAY OF WATERING A FRUIT TREE DOESN'T CAUSE IT TO SHRIVEL UP AND DIE EITHER.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PARABLE JESUS EVER SPOKE WAS THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND SEED. HE IDENTIFIES THE SEED AS THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND WARNS US AGAINST THE THINGS THAT WILL CAUSE THE GOSPEL TO NOT PRODUCE THE FRUIT THAT IT SHOULD. HE GENERALIZED BY WARNING US AGAINST THE DEVIL, TROUBLE IN LIFE, AND PLEASURES/WORRIES IN LIFE. IT IS ONLY THOSE WHO PUSH THROUGH THOSE THREATS AND STAY FAITHFUL "WHO INDEED BEARS FRUIT AND BRINGS FORTH, SOME A HUNDREDFOLD, SOME SIXTY, AND SOME THIRTY (MATTHEW 13:23)." IT'S NOT A SURPRISE THAT PAUL IS BUILDING UPON THESE AGRICULTURAL EXAMPLES FIRST INTRODUCED BY HIS LORD AND OURS.

GALATIANS 5:25-26

WE WERE ALL ONCE DEAD IN AND BECAUSE OF OUR SIN. "DEAD MEN WALKING". WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF OUR GOD, WE WERE LEFT WITHOUT HOPE. BUT BECAUSE OF THE GOOD LOVE AND GRACE OF OUR GOD WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED, FORGIVEN AND NOW HAVE PEACE WITH THE GOD WE ONCE REBELLED AGAINST. AS A RESULT, THE SPIRIT OF GOD FILLS US AND BRINGS NEWNESS AND RESTORATION IN OUR LIVES!

SO, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN MADE ALIVE BY THE SPIRIT - WE SHOULD ALSO WALK BY THE SPIRIT. IF WE HAVE BEEN GIVING LIFE, WE NOW SHOULD LIVE - NOT ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, BUT BY AND THROUGH AND DIRECTED BY THE SPIRIT.

OH AND IN THE MEANTIME, IN THIS PURSUIT, DON'T FORGET THAT THIS NEW LIFE IS ABOUT YOU AND GOD FIRST. LOOK AT YOUR OWN LIFE FIRST. LOOK AT YOUR OWN HABITS FIRST. LOOK AT YOUR OWN TREE FIRST. DON'T MAKE YOURSELF LOOK BETTER BY COMPARING YOURSELF TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT DOING WELL AND DON'T TRY TO TEAR DOWN OTHERS WHO MIGHT BE DOING WELL THROUGH CRITICISM OR JUDGMENT.

ULTIMATELY A TREE PRODUCES FRUIT WHICH WILL BE EATEN BY SOMEONE ELSE. YOUR LIFE AND THE FRUIT YOU PRODUCE WILL BE A BLESSING NOT JUST TO YOU, BUT TO THOSE AROUND YOU! YOUR PURGE OF THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH IS GOING TO BENEFIT NOT JUST YOU BUT ALSO THOSE AROUND YOU! OUR INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT. AND THAT'S WHERE PAUL IS GOING TO TURN HIS ATTENTION IN CHAPTER 6.

THIS IS A WONDERFUL CHAPTER WHICH OUTLINES SOME BASIC ELEMENTS OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS. WE OUGHT TO TAKE OUR LIVES SERIOUSLY AND PERSONALLY ASSESS (OFTEN) WHERE WE ARE, AND HOW WE ARE DOING. A GOOD FARMER WILL INSPECT HIS FARM TO KNOW THE CONDITION OF HIS SOIL AND HIS PRODUCE. HE WATCHES FOR THREATS TO *WITIA* GROWTH AND ALSO THREATS TO THE *QUALITY* OF WHAT IS ALREADY ON THE TREE.

AND ALL OF THIS IS IN RELATIONSHIP TO OUR GOD AND HIS SON JESUS, THROUGH WHOM IT IS ALL POSSIBLE AND WITHOUT WHOM WE CAN DO NOTHING. THE FRUIT WE BEAR IS NOT TO MAKE US LOOK GOOD, BUT TO BRING THEM GLORY.

JOHN 15:8 - "MY FATHER IS GLORIFIED BY THIS, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, AND SO PROVE TO BE MY DISCIPLES.

MAY WE HAVE AN ABSENCE OF THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH AND AN ABUNDANCE OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.