

## ***“The Deeds of the Flesh”***

May 22, 2011

Text: Galatians 5:19-21

### **Last Sunday we considered Paul’s words in Gal 5:16=>**

*“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”*

We learned that every Xn is in the Spirit, & is led by the Spirit, but not every Xn walks by the Spirit and follows the Spirit’s leading, as he should.

In fact, no Xn invariably/constantly lives in humble sensitivity/submissiveness to the Spirit’s lead, obeying His promptings perfectly and w/o fail.

But that’s exactly what Paul’s command to *“Walk by the Spirit”* calls us to do, as faithfully as possible.

We also discovered last week, in Rom 8:5-7, that one of the key differences between nonbelievers/born-again-believers is this matter of walking by/in the Spirit, rather than the flesh=>

*“Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. / For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life & peace, / because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.”*

\* Nonbelievers always/only live “according to their flesh.”

\* Believers *are* according to the Spirit, & the normal pattern of their lives is to walk according to the Spirit.

At times that normal pattern will be temporarily interrupted, & they will walk according to their sinful flesh, but that’s an exception to the norm.

### **This notion of the “overall pattern” of our lives is very important.**

[Rev 20:12] describes God’s final judgment of men, & it clearly suggests that He will judge them on the basis of the overall pattern of their deeds=>

*“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

Does this mean that everyone whose deeds have been perfect will go to heaven, & anyone whose deeds aren’t, will go to hell?

No, because if so, heaven would be absolutely vacant forever.

That would also mean that people might be saved by their good deeds, whereas Scripture says they can only be saved by God’s grace, thru faith in X.

By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified (Gal 2:16).

Nor does this mean God will weigh our deeds, to determine whether the good deeds outweigh the bad ones, or vice versa.

Just 1 sin would cause us to fall short of God’s glory, and that would spell our doom.

What Rev 20 actually means, is that God will examine our lives for an overall pattern of deeds that prove we are born again.

His judgment will determine whether we’ve lived our lives according to our flesh, in its hostility towards Him;  
Or lived them according to His Spirit, out of love for Him.

\* For those whose minds have been set on the flesh, there can only be death & second-death.

\* For those whose regenerated minds have been set on the things of the Spirit, the life/peace they have already come to know will be made perfect/everlasting.

Their deeds will prove that the H.S. has renewed and transformed their hearts.

### **Q: How can I know right now whether I'm walking in the Spirit, or in the flesh?**

That is an extremely important question, because at the Final Judgment it will be too late to do anything about it.

Heb 9:27=> "*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.*"

God's decision at the Judgment will be final, & it will lead to one of only 2 destinies=> heaven/hell.

Purgatory is never mentioned in the Bible, & is a fabrication of men and a denial of what the Bible reveals about the finality of the Final Judgment.

### **The question of determining now whether we are walking in the Spirit/flesh is answered in part by Paul in today's text...**

His answer is made up of 3 elements=> Principle/Proof/Penalty.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of that answer will be provided in next Sunday's text.

#### **\* The Principle**

[Galatians 5:19a]=> "*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality.*"

#### **The principle Paul is teaching us here is that everyone knows intuitively what the sinful deeds of the flesh are like.**

They may not realize they know, but that's because they are hiding the truth from themselves.

The deeds of the flesh are so "*evident*" that everyone but the most morally perverted sort of person would recognize them as being wrong, inherently evil, and deserving of divine punishment.

No right-thinking person would be surprised that they violate/offend God's moral holiness.

Paul is going to give us a list of sinful/fleshly deeds in this text, but it's only a suggestive list, not an exhaustive list.

"*Which are*" (in verse 19) is literally "such as are," & in verse 21 he'll say "*such things,*" meaning they're just a representative sampling of the deeds of the flesh.

The list only needs to be suggestive, because everyone knows that any/all such deeds are morally wrong.

#### **The "flesh" itself is the sin-principle that is driven by pride & woven into our unredeemed/unresurrected bodies.**

This thing called "the flesh" itself is elusive, not "*evident*", which is one of the reasons it's so hard for us to deal with.

But the sinful deeds produced by our flesh are evident/obvious.

They reveal the inherent sinfulness of our flesh.

They are an outward index of what's going on inside us.

As long as the thoughts of our hearts remain hidden, no one but God knows about them. But once they come out through our deeds, our heart's condition is revealed.

Those whose hearts are "in the flesh" produce the deeds of the flesh.

#### **\*\* Love is the absolute opposite of all these deeds of the flesh.**

In Gal 5:14, Paul wrote=> “*The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’*”

Love is the 1<sup>st</sup> item in Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> list—the fruit of the Spirit—which follows right after the deeds of the flesh, in Gal 5.

So these 2 lists form an antithesis, by which anyone can evaluate his own heart, to determine whether he is walking by the flesh, or walking in the Spirit.

Paul will close today’s text by saying that those who practice the deeds of the flesh shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

So this is extremely important, because it means that we can judge our own hearts by these 2 lists (asking ourselves which one better describes us), and we can make an educated guess about the true condition of our hearts.

We can evaluate our hearts based on the principle that the deeds of the flesh are evident. The proof is found in the nature of our deeds (not our feelings, but our deeds).

\* **The Proof** (our deeds themselves)

**Paul will list the deeds of the flesh according to 4 categories=>**

Sexual sins, Spiritual sins, Strife sins, and Substance sins.

That list is in=>

**[Verses 19b-21a]=> “*immorality, impurity, sensuality, / idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, / envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these*”**

as we work our way through these 15 deeds of the flesh, if you come across 1 or 2 that pertain to you, circle it in your Bible so that you can confess it to the Lord and begin to really pray that He will help you gain victory over it.

**Sexual Sins=> immorality, impurity, sensuality.**

All 3 of these are vile/treacherous counterfeits of the love for man, which God pours out into our hearts and expects/requires of us in our relationship with others.

They are unclean passions, used to trick others into thinking someone cares about them while he’s selfishly using them to please himself.

\* **Immorality**—any kind of sinful sexual activity.

It could include homosexuality, incest, & even bestiality.

But in all likelihood, the most common forms of immorality facing the Galatian Xns were the same ones that surround us=> adultery, fornication and prostitution.

Prostitution was hardly frowned at, in that Galatian culture.

To describe as “love” one man’s coveting another’s wife, or a woman having an affair with a coworker, defiles the holiness of true love.

It is lust, not love—a self-immersion into the cesspool of moral filth that has nothing to do with the *agape*-love, which originates in God’s own nature.

It’s a mockery of husband/wife love, that God ordained in the Garden, and that holds entire societies together.

\* **Impurity**—a general term for any sort of moral uncleanness or sexual vice, that would prevent one from approaching God in His absolute holiness.

This is a mental openness to promiscuity of any kind, a no-holds-barred sexual lewdness/lawlessness to which many heathen had presented their bodies as willing slaves, as do many of today’s heathen.

When the conscience becomes seared by such extremes of gross immorality, the mind develops an insatiable appetite for impurity of every kind, that cannot be satisfied.

Rom 1:24 says that when man worships the creature instead of his Creator, God gives him over in the lust of his heart to impurity, so he can wallow/defile himself in it, enslave himself to it, and dishonor himself w/ it.

Paul says it shouldn't even be named among the saints, forbidding obscene/desensitizing comments/jokes, that can take the edge off our abhorrence of such degradation.

\* *Sensuality*—indecent/shocking sexual behavior.

This is open/reckless contempt for moral standards.

Hollywood thrives on sensuality, constantly stretching the limits of its movie standards, reaching down for new depths of depravity.

When a teenage boy wears his pants so low they're on the edge of falling off, he too is engaging in sensuality.

When girls wear clothes designed to reveal rather than conceal, careless-of/indifferent-to the stumbling block they are throwing in front of others, they too are engaging in sensuality.

All such sensuality defiles bodies created by God for His glory, turning them into mindless sex objects, intended only to lure naïve, hormone-driven fools.

Unfortunately, the internet has empowered man's depravity in this area of sensuality, creating powerful stimuli and private experiences, in which the maggots of a sinful imagination quietly corrupt/consume people's minds/souls.

God has commanded us to love one another with the same lifelong care for others' welfare, that we have for ourselves.

Instead, man has turned sex into a tool of selfishness, using it for manipulation, trickery, defrauding, mocking, and taking advantage of others' weaknesses.

It's no wonder that, when sin first spoiled our relationships, Adam/Eve hid themselves from one another, behind fig leaves.

To whatever degree you/I engage in immorality, impurity or sensuality, we are walking in the flesh and we should repent.

Someone: This list of sins is depressing!

Ans: It would be, were it not for the fact that this is what X has saved us from.

He has rescued us from the muck/mire/misery of all such sinfulness.

**Spiritual Sins**=> idolatry and sorcery.

Just as the first 3 deeds of the flesh counterfeit *agape* love of man, the next 2 counterfeit love for God (which Jesus called the "foremost commandment"—Mt 22:38).

\* *Idolatry*—adoration or longing for anything in place of God.

Col 3:5 says that even greed is a form of idolatry=> a longing for things, or money w/ which to acquire things.

Any time a person tries to satisfy his soul, or find his security in anything/anyone but God, he is committing idolatry and he's walking in the flesh.

It may be the golden calf of wealth, the god of academic knowledge, the Baal of power, the Diana of fashion, the Bacchus of pleasure, or the Sophia of religion (e.g. seeking salvation thru obedience to the Law, in which man worships his own strength of will-power).

Whatever the idol he has set up in his heart to substitute for the true God, his flesh has defiled his relationship with God through it.

\* *Sorcery* (*pharmakeia*, from which we get pharmacy).

Originally it referred to mixing potions, to induce an altered state of mind for communication with gods.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this had led to a saleable skill, in which sorcerers frightened/blackmailed people with their supposed supernatural powers.

Sorcery in general is any secret tampering with evil powers, from black magic, to white magic, to palm readers, to séances, to Ouija boards.

Idolatry/sorcery are deeds of the flesh that grow out of a lack of love for God, & the desire to find a mystical substitute for God.

**Strife Sins=> enmities/strife/jealousy/anger/disputes/dissensions factions/envyings.**

\* *Enmities*—hostile feelings, animosity, & hateful attitudes that create an atmosphere conducive to quarrels, feuds, and defensiveness, suffocating the feelings of love.

People whose flesh expresses itself in this way generally dislike all but a few people they've found acceptable.

They usually hold themselves aloof, and hold their own opinions in very high esteem.

They have little love for others.

Their natural reaction to others is to view them as interruptions, obstacles, and complications of their own lives.

They tend to be contemptuous of the weak/uninteresting.

They are temperamental and easily offended, & they don't care if they offend others (except for the hassle it may cause them).

\* *Strife*—a tendency to thrive on rivalry/discord.

People who fall into this classification will argue over unimportant issues just to let you know they're still here, that they are a force to be reckoned with & their views had better be taken seriously or there's going to be trouble.

Theirs is a life of ongoing bickering/criticism/fault-finding.

\* *Jealousy*—resentment caused by rivalry/coveting.

Jealousy sickens, if someone else is praised, or prosters.

It is a self-poisoning venom of the spirit, like a rattlesnake that bites itself in the belly.

\* *Outbursts of Anger*—anger that boils over & then quickly fades.

This manifestation of the flesh produces fits of rage and unrestrained temper, that come/go quickly, but leave devastation behind it.

They may say things like, "I get mad, but I get over it quickly,"

But an atomic bomb comes/goes quickly too, and it leaves a real mess behind.

If confronted about this character flaw, the person may excuse himself, saying it's just his temperament, a family/racial trait, or the result of his upbringing.

Or he may just get angry again, because he uses anger to intimidate the others when he feels their words are an attack against him.

He has learned to shield himself with outbursts of anger.

In reality he's walking in the flesh, & he should stop it, and walk in the Spirit.

\* *Disputes*—selfish, self-seeking ambition.

Jms 3:16 matches this fleshly behavior with jealousy, & says that, together, they lead to disorder & every evil thing.

Unlike outbursts of the anger (which burn/go-out quickly), this character quality burns slowly, & keeps looking for additional fuel to throw on the fire.

And there's always more fuel available—one more supposed slight to one's dignity, 1 more insensitivity to one's feelings.

Phil 2:3 provides the solution=> "*Do nothing from selfishness (eritheia—disputes) or empty conceit, but [here's the antidote] with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.*"

\* *Dissensions*—splits/divisions within a community/Church.

In Rom 16:17-18, Paul warns church leaders to keep an eye on those who foment such divisions, and explains that they are slaves of their own appetites=> an insatiable craving to get honor unto themselves.

But in the process they create animosities between both individuals/groups that continue to fester/divide.

Once again, this is an outgrowth of fleshly pride, seen in all its loveless selfishness.

\* *Factions*—permanent divisions due to different views/loyalties.

E.g. "That group isn't very loving—as we are."

This is organized intolerance that permanently divides fellowships, and can ultimately leads to one/both groups spinning off into heresy, and/or hardness of heart, against those in the "other group" that they have officially rejected.

This is one of the grave dangers of denominationalism.

\* *Envying*s—desires to deprive others of what they have.

Whereas jealousy wishes it had what someone else has, envying is displeasure at another's good fortune.

The Bible contains a rogues gallery of enviers—Cane, Joseph's brothers, Korah, Saul, the Prodigal Son's brother, and the religious leaders who crucified X, because they envied Him.

Etymologically, the word for "envying" means to "waste away," & is closely related to the Gk word for "murder," which is where it ultimately leads (taking-away another person's life).

Envying is a very vile/ugly expression of man's sinful flesh, a hatred/meanness that finds its pleasure in pulling others down.

**Substance Sins**=> drunkenness and carousing.

These are abuses of things God created for man's good.

They are one more example of the flesh's selfishness.

\* *Drunkenness*—inebriation through alcohol or drugs (which Scripture strictly forbids).

The Bible does not treat substance-abuse as an illness, but as a moral fault=> sin.

In Lk 21:34, Jesus warned that a person's heart can become so weighed down with drunkenness/dissipation, the Day of Judgment will come upon him unawares.

Some Xns who would never engage in self-indulgence through wine, feel free to eat to excess, clothe themselves in excess, or gratify themselves to excess with other things, in other ways, not living soberly unto God's glory.

\* *Carousing*—drunken revelries.

In Paul's day, these could range from luxurious feasts in honor of the god of wine, Bacchus, to drunken, disorderly processions through the streets at night, making a shameful public display, for one's own inebriated amusement.

Today carousers often prefer parties, where righteousness isn't just disregarded, it's openly degraded/mocked, as if it were worthless.

This sort of thing hardens the heart, and is a Satanic substitute for the joy/purity of a Spirit-filled Xn life.

It should have no part in the lives of those who claim to have renounced the deeds of darkness (Rom 13:12).

1 Pet 4:3=> “*For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties & abominable idolatries.*”

### \* The Penalty

[Verse 21b] (Paul)=> “*...of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

**That is the penalty for those who walk according to the flesh=> they won't inherit the kingdom of God.**

What does that mean?

First, it *doesn't* mean that if we refrain from these 15 fleshly practices, God will accept us, and we will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Salvation is always by God's grace, not by our doing good things, or refraining from evil deeds.

It does mean that evil deeds, if they are typical of a person's life, make him unacceptable by God's holy standards to God's Kingdom.

God's Kingdom is a kingdom of holiness/righteousness, which must (by its very nature) exclude those whose character is defined by the deeds of the flesh.

It is a Kingdom filled with the fruit of the H.S.=>

Love/joy/peace/patience/kindness/goodness  
faithfulness/gentleness/self-control.

We'll learn more about these next Sunday.

God's Kingdom is the ultimate place of happiness that awaits Xns, as an inheritance, where they will reign w/ X in glory, forever.

Those whose lives are characterized by the deeds of the flesh prove that they do not belong to X, & are not born-again.

Gal 3:29=> “*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*”

The overall tenor of their lives proves that they are not in X, not Abe's seed, & therefore not heirs of promise.

I.e., that they will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

True Xns bid farewell to the deeds of darkness, & walk in the light of God's truth/righteousness.

How can we know who is righteous? He practices righteousness. It's really self-evident, just as Paul said.

1 John 3:10=> “*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*”

This is such a sobering truth, that Paul introduces it in our own text with the words=> “*I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you.*”

**But both Paul/John used the very important word “practice.”**

It means to practice continually/habitually/normally, and relates to the overall pattern of our lives.

So people who habitually indulge in the sins of the flesh show themselves to be the enemies of God, while those who habitually do good, show themselves to be children of God. It's not that a person is banned from God's Kingdom because he does the deeds of the flesh, but that he constantly practices those wicked deeds because he's not a citizen of the Kingdom—saved by Jesus X.

Someone: That's not fair! I was baptized. I've gone to church all my life! Those should be the determining factors!

Simon Magus in Acts 8 was baptized too, but he became an apostate and an enemy of the Church.

The only real issue is whether/not X has cleansed/renewed your heart, changing it so that the overall practice of your life displays the fruit of the Spirit, not the deeds of the flesh.

1 John 2:3=> "*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments*" (to love God wholeheartedly and to love other men as you love yourself).

Maybe you're saying, "I do see some of the fruit of the HS in my life, but I also see the deeds of the flesh. Where do I stand?"

Ans: Which one better describes the on-going practice of your heart/life?

Which one is increasingly becoming more dominant?

And which one could be described as the direction in which your life is moving.

If you are truly saved, you can settle the issue by walking in H.S.

If not, I, like Paul, must warn you, you won't inherit God's Kingdom.

***The Deeds of the Flesh***  
May 22, 2011

Text: Galatians 5:19-21

1. Nonbelievers always and only live “according to their flesh”; believers at times walk according to their sinful flesh, but that’s an [22 exception] to the norm.  
Gal 5:16; Rom 8:5-7; Rev 20:12
2. God will examine our lives for an overall pattern of deeds that prove we are [10 born] again.  
Heb 9:27

**The question of determining whether we are walking in the Spirit or in the flesh is answered by Paul in today’s text...**

**\* The Principle**

**[Galatians 5:19a]**

3. Everyone knows intuitively what the sinful deeds of the [12 flesh] are like.  
Mt 15:19
4. Love is the absolute opposite of all these deeds of the [12 flesh].  
Gal 5:14

**\* The Proof**

**[Verses 19b-21a]**

Sexual Sins: immorality, impurity, and sensuality.

5. These are vile, treacherous counterfeits of the [10 love] for man which God expects and requires of us.  
Rom 1:24

Spiritual Sins: idolatry and sorcery.

6. Just as the first 3 deeds of the flesh counterfeit *agape* love of man, these 2 counterfeit love for [8 God].  
Mt 22:38; Col 3:5
7. Strife Sins: enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, [18 factions], and envyings.  
Jms 3:16; Phil 2:3; Rom 16:17-18

Substance Sins: drunkenness and carousing.

8. These are abuses of things God created for man’s good; they are one more example of the [16 flesh’s] selfishness.  
Lk 21:34; I Pet 4:3

**\* The Penalty**

**[Verse 21b]**

9. The penalty for those who walk according to the flesh: They [12 won't] inherit the kingdom of God.
10. Those whose lives are characterized by the deeds of the flesh prove that they do not belong to Christ, and are [8 not] born again.  
Gal 3:29; I Jn 3:10
11. People who habitually indulge in the sins of the flesh show themselves to be the enemies of God; those who habitually do good show themselves to be [20 children] of God.  
I Jn 2:3
12. Q: I do see some of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life, but I also see the deeds of the flesh. Where do I stand? Which one better describes the [18 practice] of your heart and life?