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Galatians

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

In verse 16, Paul exhorted the Galatians (and thus us!) to "walk in the Spirit." Now he says that if we "are led by the Spirit," we are not under the law. To walk in the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit are the same concept differing only in that one is the cause while the other is the effect. It is the Spirit who should guide us. To understand this, we can look at the other option; that of the law.

If we are led by the law, then we will walk in precepts of the law. Paul is showing that the two are mutually exclusive. One cannot be led by the Spirit while being led by the law. One cannot walk in the Spirit if they are walking according to precepts of the law.

With the giving of a law, the knowledge of violating that law becomes known. When that same law is taken away, life apart from that law becomes possible once again. Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses, making it possible for sin (a violation of the law) to be dead in us. It also brought the possibility of being alive apart from the law through Jesus' work. This is noted in Romans 6:11 -

"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, because of Christ's fulfillment of the law, in its entirety, the law is annulled for those who receive His work. Therefore, if we are in Christ, we "are not under the law." Again Paul explains this in Romans 6 –

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Romans 6:12-14

Paul places "the law" and "the flesh" in the same category because of the requirement of circumcision. It was a work of the flesh and stands as representative of any deed under the law, or even of the entire law. Paul now shows that receiving the completed work of Christ and being "led by the Spirit" are in the same category. They are two entirely separate dispensations. Mixing them makes no sense; it is contradictory and one nullifies the other. If we observe works of the law, Christ is of no value to us; His work is annulled in us. If we are led by the Spirit, Christ is our hope; the law is annulled for us.

Life application: Stop with your works of the law! It is destructive and foolish.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, Galatians 5:19

In Paul's words, "Now the works of the flesh are evident..." several points arise. The first is that some of these in the list he will provide are sins of the mind. Therefore, "flesh" is speaking of the corrupt human nature rather than the physical body itself. This corrupt nature manifests itself in these acts which are contrary to holiness and godliness. The list here from Paul's hand is similar to that which Jesus mentioned in Matthew 15 -

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." Matthew 15:18-20

Another point is that these are considered "works" to Paul. When one works, they receive wages for their work. Therefore, one can expect a type of payment for these works of the flesh. In the case of these type of works, the payment will be negative and, like the works themselves, destructive. Thirdly, Paul says these works are "evident." Man has a moral compass instilled in him. These sins are sins which are recognized in societies throughout the world.

Only when members of the society purposely harden themselves against their conscience do they ignore the internal warnings which accompany these works. The first is "adultery." It is a word which speaks of a physical union between a married individual and someone who is not their spouse. However, it also is equated in the Bible with turning from the true God to false gods. It can further be defined as merging false religion with the true faith.

Fornication is the Greek word *porneia*. It is the basis of our modern "pornography." It can include whoredom, idolatry, etc. Properly, it means a "selling off" or "surrendering" of sexual purity. It further includes promiscuity of any and every type.

Uncleanness is the Greek word *akatharsia*. It is impurity or defilement in both a physical and moral sense. It comes from the idea of an open infection, leprosy, the birthing process, or even touching a corpse. Each of these defiles the physical man. The spiritual connection is anything that defiles or corrupts the spiritual and moral man.

Lewdness is the Greek word *aselgeia*. It includes things like outrageous conduct, conduct shocking to public decency, wanton violence, and wanton lewdness. It is the casting off of moral restraint and entering into unbridled licentiousness.

Life application: When there is a law, the law stirs up in us the ideas of that which is unlawful. If we are told to not pursue pornography, it piques our curiosity to see what pornography is. In Christ, we are to live by the Spirit and rely on Him as we walk in this fallen world. Only through Him can we prevail over the works of the flesh.

...idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, Galatians 5:20

Paul continues his list of the evident "works of the flesh." Nine are given in this verse beginning with idolatry. This is the worship or service of an image. It is obvious if one is worshipping or serving an image that they are not giving faithful reverence to God. They are robbing Him of what belongs to Him alone. Idolatry can be something of the heart, or it can be manifested in outward displays. It is the final warning of John in his first epistle. He closes it with the words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

Sorcery is next. In Greek it is *pharmakeia*. The word gives a clue as to what the sin is linked to. It means properly "drug-related sorcery," as in the practice of magical-arts, and so on. It involves using medicine, drugs, and spells together. Anytime someone uses drugs in order to focus on the supposed divine, they are participating in this sin.

Hatred is defined as enmity, or hostility. It is the act of thriving on this attitude of the heart. Anti-semitism is a good example of this particular work of the flesh. It is

an unbalanced thought process which demonstrates hatred for no particular reason.

Contentions are reflected in the attitude of quarreling, or strife. It is "a readiness to quarrel (having a *contentious* spirit), affection for dispute" (HELPS Word Studies). This is the person who argues for the sake of argument. There is nothing to be gained from such an attitude except further strife and enmity.

Jealousies are defined as those internal emotions where someone burns with inappropriate fervency. They lust what they do not have and they often express their burning desires in physical or emotional outbursts.

Outbursts of wrath is a single word in the Greek, *thumos*. This indicates rage or a personal venting of anger. This is displayed by violent people who refuse to control their emotions, instead using them in tirades towards any or all around them.

Selfish ambitions are self-seeking, carnal ambitions. They are displayed by those who lust for themselves, satisfying every personal desire without care for those around them.

Dissensions are pointless, groundless factions. They are brought in by those who simply desire to divide and conquer. There is no harmony in them, but rather a desire to take over everything regardless of how they get it done. Democrats in the United States perfectly display this type of behavior. They are led by chief dividers who want anything but peace and harmony in the nation.

Heresies deal with religious aspects of life. People who hold to or espouse heresies are those who divide faith into self-chosen opinions or beliefs. There is normally no basis for their teachings except what they have made up out of their

own heads. A classic example of this would be King James Onlyism. There is no rational reason for it, but it is espoused to destructive levels by those who hold to it. A more relevant example to Paul's day is what brought in the need for his epistle; that of the teaching of the Judaizers.

Life application: Stay away from the list of things in this verse.

...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. Galatians 5:21

In this verse, Paul completes his list of the "works of the flesh." After this, he will give a summary thought concerning people who pursue such works. This verse begins with envy. This is identified as strong feelings or desires which sour due to the influence of sin. It is the jealousy of a bitter mind which shows displeasure at the success or blessing of another. HELPS Word Studies goes on to say that figuratively, it is "the miserable trait of being *glad* when someone experiences misfortune or pain."

Following this are murders. This item is not in many manuscripts, but assuming it belongs, it is the unjust taking of life from another human being. It does not include capital sentences of death that are rightly handed down. Nor does it include the taking of animal life.

The next item is drunkenness. This is immoderate drinking. The Bible does not forbid the consumption of alcohol during any dispensation. Only two times is it forbidden in Scripture. The first is when the priests performed their functions at the tabernacle/temple, and the second is when a person was under the vow of a Nazirite. Other than those two, drinking is not considered sinful unless it leads to drunkenness.

Revelries are the next category. This comes from the "village-merrymaking that took place at the gathering of the grapes." Eventually the word became associated with riotous parties and drunken feasts. These often "hosted unbridled sexual immorality."

Next, to show that this list is not all-inclusive, he adds in the comment "and the like." All such works of the flesh, and any others like them, are contrary to living a holy life, dedicated to the Lord. Because of this, Paul warns them precisely of the consequences of such acts with the words, "...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."

He was warning them now, before the Day of Judgment, just as he had previously warned them in person, that those who fail to come to Christ and who participate in such works of the flesh will not be saved. They will not participate in the messianic blessings which God offers through the giving of His Son. This brings in the obvious question as to whether our continued salvation is dependent on our works.

If this is true, then that means that our initial salvation must be as well. Logically, if one has to do something in order to keep being saved, then the initial salvation is also dependent on what we do, or salvation is not a "guarantee." But it is called exactly that by Paul in Ephesians 1. The answer is that all sin is under the blood of Christ when one comes to Him by faith.

Hence, there are two distinct judgments noted in Scripture. The first is that for believers, and which results in rewards and loss of rewards. The second is for non-believers and it will result in condemnation. Paul speaks of these things in detail in his other letters. For the believer who has been cleansed by Christ, Paul will next explain what is expected of us while in this continued earthly walk.

Life application: If we are to live out our lives after coming to Christ pursuing any of the vile deeds of the flesh that Paul has described, then those around us will see and will never learn what it means to call out to Christ. We may not lose our own salvation when we stumble and fall, but we may become a stumblingblock to those who might otherwise come to Him. Let us pursue holiness and righteous living all of our days.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, Galatians 5:22

Beginning with "But..." Paul now contrasts the deeds of the flesh of the previous verses with the fruits of the Spirit. One can understand the contrast when considering that "works of the flesh" stem from the natural, earthly man. He is fallen, and his works produce that which is unfit for the kingdom of God. To contrast this, that which stems from "the Spirit" is given to show that these do not flow from our own nature, but rather from God.

It should be noted that each of these fruits appear to be things which any person can possess, even if they have never come to Christ. However, this is incorrect. Only through the Spirit are our actions acceptable to God. Without Christ's covering, our works are tainted with sin, and any fruit we have is already corrupted. Further, the use of some of these words is only in relation to that which is of divine origin. This fruit of the Spirit includes:

Love - This is love which is expressed to our Creator and to other humans which is pure and undefiled. It follows the description given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, and it is a volitional act of the will. It is, in particular, love directed to God more than anything else. The reason for this is that this, as a fruit, is set in contrast to the works of the flesh which are carnal and earthly. This is uniting; that is divisive.

Joy - This word is etymologically linked to words meaning "rejoice because of grace," "joy because of grace," and "grace." Therefore, it signifies the knowledge and understanding of God's grace and favor. In essence, it is the recognition of His grace in our lives... something to be truly joyous about.

Peace - This word indicates "peace of mind." It is comparable to the Jewish word "shalom" which indicates more than just calm, but wholeness and completion when all the essential parts are joined together. It is God's gift of wholeness.

Longsuffering - Patience is the short definition here. But it is a bit fuller than that. It is a divinely regulated endurance which even is used by God of Himself to show that He is truly able to endure our waywardness in order to reveal His character to us. It demonstrates the ability to wait a sufficient time before expressing anger. Thus, it withholds any premature use of force concerning offense.

Kindness - This word is described as that which is well-suited for use. It is the ability to meet real needs in the way that God would meet them, and in the timing He would meet them. As it is a divinely generated type of kindness, it is rightly known as a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit produces in us a goodness which meets the needs of others while avoiding natural, carnal harshness.

Goodness - This speaks of goodness which is intrinsic in nature. It is a quality or condition which is related to believers because its source is found in God. It is revealed in both moral and spiritual excellence.

Faithfulness - The word here is noted by HELPS Word Studies as always being a gift from God; never that which can be produced by people. It is "God's *divine persuasion*" – and therefore distinct from human belief (confidence), yet involving it. The Lord continuously *births faith* in the yielded believer so they can know what He prefers, i.e. the *persuasion of His will* (1 Jn 5:4)."

Life application: In a cursory reading of these fruits of the Spirit, one might think that they possessed them apart from coming to Christ. This is not the case. The gifts that God offers, through His Spirit, are unique to believers. Further, they are not automatically obtained. Rather, they develop as we yield ourselves to Christ. This can be done through prayer, praise, fellowship, study of the word, etc. Be well rounded in your walk and yield your life daily to the Lord. As you do, He will continue to fill you with His Holy Spirit.