

Message #19**Galatians 5:19-21**

We saw last time that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have God's Spirit in you, but you are also still human. You have a human sin nature from birth. So as you travel through life you have God's Spirit and you still have your human sin nature. **One of these natures continually dominates your life as a believer.**

As a believer there are two ways one can live life. One can live life controlled by their flesh or one may live life controlled by the Spirit of God. The habitual pattern of our life is dominated by one or the other.

Now there are moments when our flesh flares up and we fail. Sometimes even the best of believers fail. David did and so did Peter. However, this was not their habitual character. This was a moment of flesh weakness.

The key to holiness is not perfection; the key to holiness is what we continually permit to control us, our flesh or God's Spirit. Holiness, in part, is determined by victory over our flesh. It is not determined by living in some monastery or by depriving ourselves of food or sleep or by walking rather than driving a car. Holiness is determined by victory over our flesh.

Now those who are dominated by their flesh are closely connected to the O.T. Law (Gal. 5:18). A legalist sees no need to cultivate a close dependency on the Holy Spirit, because he depends on his rules, laws, traditions, creeds and codes. What Paul wanted to communicate to these Galatians here is this:

THOSE WHO LIVE THEIR LIVES DEPENDING ON THE LAW AND THEIR FLESH MANIFEST THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND NOT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT; AND ONE WHO IS FLESH-DOMINATED WILL LOSE HIS INHERITANCE.

Now in **verse 19** when Paul says the deeds of the flesh "**ARE**" evident, the verbal is present tense. What this means is that someone who is living life following their flesh continually manifests flesh-works. In fact, the words "are evident" indicate that these things are open and plain and not hidden. In other words, you can sense it and see it.

If one is being led by the flesh, you will be able to sense it and see it. The flesh-works will continually manifest themselves in a believer who is flesh-controlled. As we analyze these flesh-works there are about five categories: 1) Flesh-works that are sexual; 2) Flesh-works that promote false doctrine; 3) Flesh-works that demonstrate personal animosity toward others; 4) Flesh-works that show partiality; 5) Flesh-works of disorderliness.

As we work our way through these flesh-works, I am certain sooner or later we will stumble into some things on the list that you will spot within yourself. **The key to this is whether or not this is the habitual, continual practice all the time. This determines whether we are controlled by the flesh or the Spirit.**

Now there are fifteen flesh-works named here and if any of these things continually dominate your life, then the Spirit of God is not controlling your life. Everything in this list arises from our flesh. These things are not to be blamed on Satan or on demons. These things arise from our own flesh. **These flesh things show us our own depravity.**

FLESH WORK #1 – The flesh-work of immorality. **5:19a**

The first three flesh-works have to do with sexual immorality. Life that is being dominated by the flesh and not the Holy Spirit will be a life that is focused on a lot of immoral sexual stuff. Back in Paul's day in the Roman world, immoral sex was part of the norm and culture.

There were places of worship where one could go to participate in some form of immoral sex. Immoral behavior was not only condoned, it was promoted as something essential and normal to life. This is why Paul said a leader in a church needed to be a one woman man. One could not be a leader and be caught up in sexual immorality with other people.

Now the word for "immorality" is porneia, from which we get our English word pornography. This particular Greek word is not restrictive and it refers to any type of sexual activity that is not legitimate according to the Word of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 373).

Now the only place where God sanctions sexual activity as legitimate is in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. A husband and wife have the right to enjoy themselves, and any other activity outside of this is classified as immoral.

Now a key to not being dominated by the flesh in this area or any other area is "make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Romans 13:14). Those who are controlled by the Spirit will be careful about what they permit in their lives on the TV, Internet, Movies, and associations.

FLESH WORK #2 – The flesh-work of impurity. **5:19b**

The word "impurity" refers to that which is unclean with a ceremonial uncleanness that makes it unacceptable to God (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

In Leviticus 18, God lists several sexual sins that fall under this category of being unclean detestable sins:

- 1) Sex with a close relative. 18:6
- 2) Sex with a mother or a father's wife. 18:7-8
- 3) Sex with a sister or any daughter or a father or mother. 18:9
- 4) Sex with a son's daughter or daughter's daughter. 18:10
- 5) Sex with an aunt. 18:11-13
- 6) Sex with an uncle's wife. 18:14
- 7) Sex with a son's wife. 18:15
- 8) Sex with a brother's wife. 18:16

- 9) Sex with a mother and daughter. 18:17
- 10) Sex with a mother, her children or children's children. 18:17
- 11) Sex with your mate's sister. 18:19
- 12) Sex with a neighbor's wife. 18:20
- 13) Sex with children in the context of false religion. 18:21
- 14) Sex with a person of the same sex. 18:22
- 15) Sex with an animal. 18:23

These are impure things and there are some people who are controlled by these kinds of things.

FLESH WORK #3 – The flesh-work of sensuality. **5:19c**

The word “sensuality” is a word that literally means licentious and excess. This word describes that which is out in the open with no sense of shame or restraint (*Ibid.*, p. 63). We may conclude that if one is consumed by sex, one is not controlled by the Spirit of God.

If sexual stuff is the dominating focus of your life, you are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is that simple.

FLESH WORK #4 – The flesh-work of idolatry. **5:20a**

Every form of worship that is not devoted to an accurate understanding of the Word of God is idolatrous. It does not matter how serious or devoted the people may be. It is idolatrous. There are many who worship their church more than they want to know the God revealed in the Scriptures. There are many who worship their denomination and are not after truth.

Now the word “idolatry” actually refers to more than false idols made with hands. This word literally refers to an image or phantom likeness (*Ibid.*, p. 131). Many people create their own phantom-likeness “god.” Some worship their business. Some worship their education. Some worship themselves.

In Paul's writings there were at least three ways one could commit idolatry:

- 1) Worship and devote yourself to something other than God.
- 2) Go to a place of worship that was not devoted to truth (I Cor. 10:7, 14).
- 3) Be a greedy person who wants more for self and doesn't put God first (Col. 3:5; I Tim. 6:17-19).

There are those who are dominated by their flesh every Sunday because they go to a church that is not really interested in them carefully and accurately knowing the Word of God.

FLESH WORK #5 – The flesh-work of sorcery. **5:20b**

The word “sorcery” is pharmakia from which we get our English word “pharmacy.” The Greek word is closely associated with drugs. There are many people who are controlled by their flesh and the proof of it is they take their drugs.

Spirit-controlled people do not habitually take mind controlling substances. In fact, those involved in witchcraft and sorcery often have a connection to various drugs.

FLESH WORK #6 – The flesh-work of enmity. **5:20c**

This word literally refers to hostile hatred (*Ibid.*, p. 192). There are people who are hateful and hostile people to everyone and everything. They are characteristically this way all of the time. These are flesh-dominated mean and hateful people.

FLESH WORK #7 – The flesh-work of strife. **5:20d**

This word “strife” refers to contentious wrangling (*Ibid.*, p. 180). One who is controlled by the flesh cannot get along with anyone because he/she sees himself or herself in rivalry with everyone and everything.

These kinds of people are always causing problems. They are always fighting and quarreling with their brothers and sisters.

FLESH WORK #8 – The flesh-work of jealousy. **5:20e**

This word has to do with a burning desire or zeal that wants something someone else has. W. E. Vine does a good job of drawing a distinction between “envy” and “jealousy.” Vine says “envy” desires to deprive or take away something another has and “jealousy” desires to have the same sort of thing another has (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 37).

People dominated by flesh are jealous people. Board members are jealous of other board members. Musicians are jealous of other musicians. S.S. teachers are jealous of other S.S. teachers. Ministers are jealous of other ministers. All of this is a flesh frenzy that is not Spirit led.

FLESH WORK #9 – The flesh-work of anger outbursts. **5:20f**

The words here describe a hot, passionate, emotional outburst of impulsive anger (*Ibid.*, p. 210). This describes one who has continual and uncontrolled outbursts of anger and fits of rage. There is a place for getting angry and getting mad. There is a place to get so angry that one would overturn tables or deliver one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

This type of anger here is for no good reason. One who is controlled by the flesh blows up all the time for no reason. There was an old Puritan who said, “I am determined so to be angry as not to sin, therefore to be angry at nothing but sin.”

FLESH WORK #10 – The flesh-work of disputes. **5:20g**

The word “dispute” is very interesting. It means self-seeking ambition caused by rivalry (*Ibid.*, p. 179). This word actually described a man who wanted a public or political office not from a motive of service, but a motive of self-centered gain. Those controlled by flesh are driven by self-seeking, self-promoting ambition and they like to argue and dispute to gain attention.

FLESH WORK #11 – The flesh-work of dissensions. **5:20h**

The word “dissensions” means to stand apart in an attitude of dissension (*Ibid.*, p.118). There are always those odd ducks who stand apart from the group and they are not led by God’s Spirit at all; they are led by their own flesh. The Spirit of God produces unity, but there are some who are always at odds with others. Frankly these people are out of fellowship with God. This is more than just difference of opinion; this is a flesh-controlled dissension.

FLESH WORK #12 – The flesh-work of factions. **5:20i**

The word “faction” refers to one who chooses to be captured by some peculiar opinion or heresy (*Ibid.*, p. 13). These are arguments that are not true to the Word of God. A factious person is one who will cause division over some odd or weird idea that is not sound. There are many flesh-dominated people who are like this.

No one is led by the Spirit of God to start a factious war over some version of the Bible. No one is led by the Spirit of God to start some factious war over some quirky doctrine. These are flesh led things.

FLESH WORK #13 – The flesh-work of envy. **5:21a**

Envy is the other side of jealousy. Envy wants to take away something someone else has—tangible things, reputation, status, impact. Envy does not so much want something for self; it wants to take away what someone else has. Jealousy wants what others have—looks, money, fame, position. But envy doesn’t want someone else to have it.

FLESH WORK #14 – The flesh-work of drunkenness. **5:21b**

The Greek word here is unusual. The normal word for wine is “oinos.” The word used here is “methai,” from which we would get our English word “meth.” Those who are getting drunk or are taking drugs to the point that they are out of their rational minds and are totally dominated by their flesh.

FLESH WORK #15 – The flesh-work of carousing. **5:21c**

This refers to one who is given over to reveling and unrestrained revelry.

Now the world is okay with all of these things. In fact, the world will say you are just having a good time. Just sowing some wild oats. But carefully notice the end of **verse 21**. Paul says I am forewarning every believer that if any person continually practices any of these things, you will not have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

Those believers who habitually practice these kinds of things are going to lose their inheritance. In fact, the Greek word “inherit” means they will lose their portion or lot that should have been theirs (*Ibid.*, p. 249).

If one is a believer and persists in continually being dominated by the flesh, you will not be assigned an honorable inheritance in the Kingdom of God. A believer can cost himself eternal rewards. God wants victory over our flesh.

Let me put this in a Galatian context. If you give yourself to be a legalistic O.T. law-keeper, you will lose rewards. You are missing out on a wonderful relationship with the Holy Spirit.