

GALATIANS

Lesson 19

The Manifestations of the Sin Nature and the Spirit Galatians 5:19-23

INTRODUCTION

One of the most shocking things for a new Christian to discover, soon after the conversion to Christ honeymoon is over, is that he still has a great capacity (potential) within himself to sin. This is a very painful discovery and quite frustrating, for he tries to hide the manifestations of the flesh or the sin nature so people will not think he is unspiritual. He begins to realize that within him is some principle, which wants to do evil and some other principle which wants to please God. The result of all this is a mighty conflict in the Christian's life. The sin nature (flesh) can only be controlled by the Holy Spirit and it is the Christian's responsibility to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16 **"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."**).

Galatians 5:16 says when the Christian is walking in dependence upon the Holy Spirit (controlled by the Spirit) he will not fulfill, gratify, execute, and perform the desires (evil impulses) of the sin nature. It does not say he will not have the desires (lusts) of the sin nature. When the Christian is walking in the Spirit, he will experience the desires of the sin nature but he will not indulge them.

Sinful impulses are sin but having an evil thought or emotion is not the same as doing the sinful act. Jesus Himself said to lust after a woman with wrong motives was to commit adultery in the heart. This is mental sin, which must be confessed. However, it is not the act of adultery which is the actual breaking of the moral law. Most battles with sin occur in the mind, and evil desire when yielded to is a breaking of the moral law with all of its consequences.

After we discover the sin nature within us as Christians and experience agonizing frustration, we begin to ask ourselves how we can produce Christ-like characteristics in our lives. The answer is to be filled, controlled, yielded to the Holy Spirit. Christianity is a spiritual conflict but in the midst of the conflict God has provided the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit in the Christian. God has given us supernatural enablement to live the Christian life. The Christian in dependence on the Holy Spirit can produce the fruit of the Spirit.

THE ACTS OF THE SIN NATURE 5:19-21a

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious"

Every Christian still has the sin nature in him and has the capacity to do any type of sin. The acts (works) of the sin nature are outward displays or public manifestations of the evil capacity of sin nature within us. The acts are the fruit of the sin nature and the sin nature itself is the root of evil. The acts of the flesh are obvious, which means these outward displays cannot be hidden but are clearly seen.

No Christian will begin to live a life of progressive holiness until he faces up honestly to his real capacity to sin. This is the starting point of progressive victory over sin.

"Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery"

The sin nature manifests itself in the area of sex. Sex in itself is not wrong, for God has made the sex act for the marriage relationship. Nor is it wrong to have normal or natural bodily appetites for sex, for without those desires there would be no attraction to the opposite sex. Sex is not wrong, but the perversion of sex is wrong.

Sexual immorality. The Greek word is *pornea* and has reference to all kinds of sexual immorality, such as premarital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism and pornography.

Impurity. This refers to uncleanness in sexual immorality with a total disregard for the eternal moral law of God.

Debauchery. This is lewdness and wantonness in sexual relations with unrestrained acts, shocking public decency.

The great danger of sexual perversion is that it not only destroys a person physically (unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, etc.), but also psychologically and spiritually, because it is accompanied by so much guilt (1 Cor. 6:18 **“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”**).

Christians will be tempted in the area of sex but through dependence upon the Holy Spirit they do not have to indulge the flesh. Let's face it; television, movies, magazines, the Internet and other types of sexually explicit things feed the flesh, causing men and women to fantasize about illegal sex, which is a violation of the moral law of God.

“Idolatry and witchcraft.”

The sin nature manifests itself in the area of religion.

Idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of false gods. It does not have to be a wooden idol. A person may worship the god of materialism, social status, or pride. Anything that is placed before God is idolatry.

Witchcraft. Witchcraft is sorcery or the art of black magic associated with the use of drugs. The Greek word is *pharmacia*, from which we get our English word “pharmacy” which means drugs. The flesh abuses drugs and uses them for evil and calls this a religious experience. Witchcraft ascribes to natural objects supernatural powers and is the result of a false view of God and the world. The horoscope, ouija board, palm reading, tarot cards or other evil things which cause people to act in the place of God, substituting God's authority with man's authority, panders the flesh and is straight from hell.

“Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy”

The sin nature manifests itself in the area of relationships and society. The flesh causes breakdowns in personal relationships.

Hatred. This is animosity and holding a grudge.

Discord. This is causing strife, in-fighting and contention.

Jealousy. This is envy over someone else's success which can be limitless since there are always people who are better and do better than us, spiritually devastating the bitter person.

Fits of rage. This is a passionate outburst of negative emotion and uncontrollable temper.

Selfish ambition. This is striving to advance self with no concern for others and their feelings.

Dissensions. This is causing divisions and quarreling such as those who are trouble-makers in the home, community and church.

Factions. This is a reference to heresies and those who leave orthodox Christianity to form organized parties, sects or cults.

Envy. This is feelings of ill will or malice because of greed.

“Drunkenness, orgies.”

The sin nature manifests itself in the abuse of alcohol (or any illegal drugs which cause a form of drunkenness).

Drunkenness. This speaks of any drunken excesses of any kind, including anything from a light glow to total saturation with alcohol.

Martin Luther said,

Paul does not say that eating and drinking are works of the flesh, but intemperance in eating and drinking, which is a common vice today, is a work of the flesh. Those who are given to excess are to know that they are not spiritual but carnal. (*Commentary on Galatians*)

Orgies. This refers to reveling, drinking parties, carousing which results in lewd activities of all kinds. Some have translated this “night-clubbing.”

“And the like.”

Paul has merely given a representative list of the acts of the flesh because there are many more. The sin nature is capable of producing every conceivable type of sin. This is why the Christian must be constantly depending upon the Holy Spirit in his experience, or he may find himself doing something that will: (1) displease his God; (2) defile himself; (3) offend others; (4) disgrace his loved ones, and (5) place him directly in line for God’s discipline.

It is important to know the specific weaknesses of your own sin nature because when the evil impulses come you will try to rationalize or justify your actions, saying something like the following: “I know these evil desires are wrong, but they seem so right, so I will just give into them and stop fighting.” “Surely a little sin can’t hurt that much so I will yield to the desires of my sin nature and do the act of sin.” “Everyone has his or her evil impulses so why should I be different? I will give in and be like everyone else.”

I know it is wrong to give into my evil impulses but God is full of mercy and grace so I will go ahead and sin and He will forgive me.”

III. WARNING TO CHRISTIANS 5:21b

“I warn you, as I did before.”

Paul had warned these Christians once before about their need to keep the flesh under control. A second warning shows he is dead serious about this matter.

Paul expected true Christians to walk in dependence on the Spirit to some degree. Paul knew that the Holy Spirit had taken up residence in every true Christian, and the work of the Holy Spirit would be manifest to some degree in every true child of God.

“That those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Obviously Paul has the unsaved or unregenerate in view here. Yet it is a particular kind of unregenerate person—the professing Christian. The man who says he is a Christian and is constantly producing the works of the flesh and gives no evidence of a changed life has only made a profession but there is not real possession of Christ. (Eph. 5:3-7 **“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an**

idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” 1 Cor. 6:9-11 **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”**) This is a present tense in the Greek and could be translated; “He who keeps on living, repeatedly living like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Paul is obviously talking about habitual practice rather than an isolated lapse into sin.

Every Christian has certain weaknesses and areas of sin in his personality that keeps cropping up over and over again. The issue is desire not perfection. The Christian will desire to bring his sin nature under the control of the Spirit. If a professing Christian has no desire to control the sin nature, then it is time to question the reality of one's salvation.

The Christian may lapse into the flesh because of his failure to depend upon the Holy Spirit. If he does, he will have the conviction of the Holy Spirit and be a miserable person. He will not have inner peace until he confesses that sin to God, purposes to turn from it, and gets up by faith and again walks in dependence upon the Spirit. Christians can sin but their action will always be followed by great conviction from God.

Christians also fall and perform the lusts of the flesh. David fell horribly into adultery. Peter also fell grievously when he denied Christ. However great these sins were, they were not committed to spite God, but from weakness. When their sins were brought to their attention, these men did not obstinately continue in their sin, but repented. Those who sin through weakness are not denied pardon as long as they rise again and cease to sin. There is nothing worse than to continue in sin. If they do not repent, but obstinately continue to fulfill the desires of the flesh, it is a sure sign that they are not sincere. (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*)

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is . . .”

Fruit speaks of an outward evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit working inwardly. When the Christian is in dependence upon the Spirit and not fulfilling the desires of the sin nature, the Spirit is producing the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian.

Notice that fruit (singular) is contrasted with the acts (works) of the sin nature (plural). The singular tells us there is a unity in the fruit of the Spirit. When the Christian is dependent upon the Spirit, certain Christian characteristics are produced in one's life.

By faith the Christian is trusting the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in him, and this fruit will be manifested through the will, mind and emotion of the Christian. This is the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. NOTE: In 2 Peter 1 it says, **“You add to your faith kindness, self-control, love.”** We add to our faith as we trust the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in us.

“Love, joy, peace”

The Spirit manifests Himself in the area of the Christian's **relationship to God**.

Love. Love is a supernatural love, which causes the Christian to love God first and to manifest this love to others.

Joy. Joy is that inward elation of having a personal relationship with God through Christ, which manifests itself in a joyful attitude towards serving God and others.

Peace. Peace is that inward serenity and confidence that God has all things under control and this manifests itself in a peaceful attitude towards others.

“Patience, kindness, goodness”

The Spirit manifests Himself in the area of the Christian’s **relationship to other people**.

Patience. Patience is self-restraint, which does not retaliate when others hurt you or disappoint you.

Kindness. Kindness is to be understanding and sympathetic towards others not having a war-like or cantankerous attitude.

Goodness. Goodness is a kindly disposition towards others with a benevolent attitude.

“Faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

The Spirit manifests Himself in the area of the Christian’s **relationship to himself**.

Faithfulness. Faithful is a man’s honesty towards others and his reliability as a Christian man. He fulfills his word and keeps his commitments. He can be trusted.

Gentleness. Gentleness is a humility, which manifests itself in consideration and courtesy towards others.

Self-control. Self-control is mastery of selfish goals and desires so as to have a godly life before others.

Spirit filled Christians will discipline themselves to do the will of God.

“Against such things there is no law.”

The fruit of the Spirit is God-ward, man-ward and self-ward, and it will show up in various degrees in all Spirit controlled Christians. Why? Because all Christians are being led by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:18 **“But if (since) you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”**).

The Mosaic Law or any other law can bring no charge against the fruit of the Spirit. The function of the Law is to curb, to restrain, to deter, and the greatest deterrent to sin is the fruit of the Spirit as one is controlled (filled) with the Spirit and walking in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

There is a law, of course, but it does not apply to those who bear these fruits of the Spirit. The Law is not given for the righteous man. A true Christian conducts himself in such a way that he does not need any law to warn or to restrain him. He obeys the Law without compulsion. The Law does not concern him. As far as he is concerned, there would not have to be any Law. (Luther)

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ, do you know anything of joy and peace? Supernatural joy and supernatural peace come only from God, and God only provides these for His true children who have trusted in Jesus Christ.

The man without Christ cannot experience joy and peace because his sins have separated him from God. Your lack of peace and joy are due to sin in your life. For those who acknowledge they are sinners and stand under the wrath of God, and then turn to Christ for forgiveness and eternal life, they will experience God’s peace and joy that can only be known through the work of the Holy Spirit. Trust Christ and come alive spiritually!