

“WORKS OF THE FLESH”

INTRODUCTION

- I. There are many types of “works” set forth in the New Testament.
 - A. There are the works of God, works of the Law of Moses, the works of man, the works of the devil and the works of the flesh.
 - B. The term “works of the flesh” is found only **one** time in the New Testament—Gal. 5:19.
 1. Here, Paul refers to the working of sinful things that that people in human flesh DO, that involve actions of physical bodies (of flesh), and are popular, but war against the soul.
 2. Some often allows fleshly desires to control their actions, resulting in sin. (Jas. 1:14-15)
 3. Sin actually begins in the heart, to allow sin to take control of the flesh.
- II. Now let’ engage in the subject, “Works of the flesh.”

DISCUSSION

I. 1st, let’s consider our “WALK IN THE SPIRIT”.

- A. This walk is discussed in the verses just prior to the “works of the flesh”, in Gal. 5:16-17, which begins when we obey the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and are baptized into Christ to begin following Him.
 1. From that time on, we are to cease loving the things based on our fleshly appetites, for they are temporal, and not of God. 1 John 2:15-17
 2. This means the Christian is at war with the devil, with his flesh being the battleground between man’s spirit and the devil. Gal. 5:16-17
- B. Then, Paul tells us the various spiritual time-bombs we need to avoid. Gal. 5:19-21

II. 2nd, let’s consider the “WORKS OF THE FLESH”.

- A. The 1st category deals with things pertaining to perhaps one of the strongest desires of the flesh—sexual yearnings and desires. **v. 19**
 1. We shall begin with this section, which was the first part of Paul’s message ON the “works of the flesh”, and in other parallel or similar passages, the sins mentioned here are some of the first in those passages as well.
 2. Here, there is disagreement on the subject of the first work of the flesh, apparently because adultery is so prevalent that many try to justify it for themselves or a relative.
 3. Several years ago while preaching in Albuquerque, N. M. I delivered a series of lessons on “Divorce and Remarriage.” One young man there who was stationed in the Air Force disagreed with what I said, stating that he had never heard such a ridiculous position that I had taken. As the series continued, he continued to criticize me to my face. I finally looked him in the eye, and said, “Stan, it seems to me that what you are saying in objection to my sermon, that one of two things exists, that you are either trying to justify yourself or someone close to you. WHICH IS IT?” He ducked his head and said meekly, “It’s my sister,” as he turned and walked away, as I had exposed his motive. Later however, word came to me from someone in that congregation that there was another episode with Stan, and that it came out that HE himself was mixed up in an unscriptural marriage, so he may have well been attempting to justify himself all along.
- B. Now let’s look at this category of “works of the flesh.”
 1. **Adultery** is the first sin Paul mentions here, which refers to any physical sexual relationship between 2 people outside of the marriage union, but usually is associated with a marriage situation.
 - a. One woman was caught in the very “act” of adultery. John 8:4 (Discuss as desired).
 - b. Joseph resisted the offer of Potiphar’s wife to commit adultery with her, and he said that she belonged to her husband, and he (Joseph) would not sin against God. Gen. 39:1-23
 - c. Adultery actually begins in the “heart” when man makes plans to commit such. Matt. 5:32
 - d. Jesus explains that adultery is committed by the man or woman who puts away a mate for **other** reasons than “fornication”, and then marries another, **and**

anyone who marries such a person (guilty of fornication or other reasons) **also** is guilty of adultery. Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11-12

e. Nowadays it is more popular for many to just move in and just “live together” sexually, than to marry, committing adultery and bringing shame to God’s institution of marriage. Heb. 13:4

2. **Fornication** is a more general word for ALL FORMS of illicit sex, including homosexuality. (Gen. 18-19); Jude 7; 1 Cor. 6:18

a. Fornication is a sin against one’s own body. 1 Cor. 6:18-20

b. Fornication is a sin against the home, as it undermines the sanctity of the home, and is the only sin that Jesus states which allows the fornicator to be put away, and then to remarry without being guilty of adultery. Matt. 19:8-9

c. Fornication is a sin against the soul. Prov. 6:20-35

d. Fornication is a sin against the church. 1 Cor. 5:1-13

e. Fornication is a sin against Christ Himself. 1 Cor. 6:13-20

3. **Uncleanness** is the next word Paul uses, which is NOT referring to uncleanness of the body, but moral uncleanness in matters related to sexual appeal in nakedness, pornography, as determined by the context of scripture where the word is used. Rev. 3:18; Exo. 28:42; Lev. 18:8

a. Uncleanness is used by Paul in describing homosexuality. Rom. 1:24-18

b. Uncleanness is also found in parallel passages on fleshly works. Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5

4. **Lasciviousness** is next, which refers to “unchaste handling of the private areas

of another person’s body”, and indecent body movements, for gratification of fleshly desires.

a. This activity often begins during dating and courtship, when desires are stimulated.

b. It is also prevalent with the close contact between two people on the dance floor.

c. Lasciviousness is usually the last action before fornication is committed.

5. God wants us to control the desires of the flesh, and has established marriage and the home for the proper gratification of these basic desires. 1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4

a. Having sexual desires is not a sin within itself, but when fulfilled improperly, it is a sin.

b. The word “lust” is from the Greek word *epithumia*, which simply means desires, which can be good or evil. Luke 22:15; cf James 1:14-15; Rom. 13:14

B. The 2nd category of the works of the flesh relates to **false religious activities and drugs. v. 20**

1. **Idolatry** involved the worship of idols, and the feasts that characterized them, which was a major problem in the first century and many converts came out of such practices.

2. **Witchcraft** is next, which was another form of religious experiences, that were often stimulated through the use of drugs.

a. The Greek word for witchcraft is *pharmakea* (which is related to our “pharmacies,” where drugs are dispensed legally).

b. The use of ANY illegal drug for a stimulating experience, is sinful.

1) To experiment even ONE TIME to find out if it is as great as users of drugs claim, may WELL so affect your brain that you may know right then that you are addicted, and cease to enjoy anything unless it is drug related, as you move on to the “homeless” world.

2) Pleasure use of drugs needs to be avoided, no matter how some may criticize you.

3. **Hatred** is next on the list, which deals with bad emotions of unkindness to other people—friends or enemies. Matt. 5:44

4. **Variance** (or “strife”, ASV) is next on the list, and usually follows “hatred”, as one becomes quarrelsome and cantankerous.

5. **Emulations** or jealousies (ASV, NKJ) is bitterness that exists when someone else has a better fortune than you may have.

6. **Wrath** or anger is easily aroused, referring to fiery disposition, like Cain had toward Abel in Gen. 4. cf Eph. 4:26

7. **Seditious** refers to being factious over matters that arise in normal walks of life, or even in religious matters where human judgment is involved.

8. **Heresies** is next, which is strong opinion and beliefs that results in division and rebellion, whether in the church, personal, or family relationships.

C. Finally, there is the 3rd category of **SOCIAL relationships. v. 21**

1. **Envy** is first in this category, as one resents other's success, and disregarding them because of it.
2. **Drunkness** is listed next, which is the state of being intoxicated or affected through the use of any alcoholic drink.
 - a. The BEST and RIGHT attitude toward ANY use of alcohol is to **AVOID** or to practice "**abstinence**"--leave it alone. Prov. 20:1; Eph. 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:11
 - b. I read a very compromising and attitude of a denominational "pastor" who said, *"While I'm glad that we live in times when a Christian can have a glass of wine with a meal without having to look over their shoulder, or enjoy a beer with a friend without a guilty conscience, I wonder if some have taken this liberty too far."*
 - 1) Yes, Mr. Pastor, taking something "too far" is one of the evils OF drinking.
But the Pastor seemed to be saying that some drinking is okay, if it does't go too far, but how far is too far without it being sinful?
 - 2) True Christians are going to be conscious of a bad and sinful example.
 - 3) Drinking alcohol is a devil's appeal to the lust of the flesh.
3. **Revelings** is the last word Paul uses in this list, which describes a type of drinking parties, with all the boisterousness that results from drinking alcohol.

CONCLUSION

- I. Finally, Paul concludes with the term, **"and such like"** (v. 21) which is a **principle**, where we can apply to any situation similar to the things listed here, or a similar sinful situation that men may invent in generations to come, that are similar, but not named in this passage. Cf 1 Cor. 6:9-11
 - A. The stated reason is that those who DO these things shall not enter into heaven. v. 21
 - B. After this, Paul shows the good results of being faithful to WALK IN THE SPIRIT (which we first discussed in this lesson), and be VICTORIOUS over the WORKS OF THE FLESH, discussed in verses 22-25.
- II. Do you need to make correction of your life this hour?

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