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The Fruit of the Spirit

Scripture, Galatians 5:19-26

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Introduction

In the last study we saw how the works of the flesh and the activity of the Spirit are at war with each other. The following is a “players’ lineup to the two opposing sides.

Our Study

Verse 19. *Now the works of the flesh are evident:*

Paul is saying that it is not difficult to know what the works of the flesh are as they are evident, meaning they are plain to see and not hard to discern.

sexual immorality... The original is the Greek *porneia* from which we use in the English word pornography. It means sexual sin in the general sense but often carries a more specific meaning of sexual relations outside of marriage.

impurity... This word suggests other forms of immoral behavior but it would include sexual sin.

sensuality... A public display or indecent flaunting of sexual suggestiveness—not modest.

Verse 20. *idolatry...* The worship of false gods.

sorcery... The worship of evil. In ancient times this involved the use of various potions and drugs hence the Greek term *pharmakeia* from which we get pharmacy.

enmity... This is closely related to the word that means enemy. To have enmity is to see the other as an antagonist.

strife... The discord of a quarrelsome spirit.

jealousy... A word that means “zeal” but a zeal that is willing to eliminate or hinder another person.

fits of anger... Outbursts of a bad temper.

rivalries, dissensions, divisions... These three words can be lumped together. They have similar meanings and perhaps Paul was lumping them together to stress the importance of keeping peace in the brotherhood. Something like, “No matter what word one may use, strife is not love.” The word translated “divisions” is the Greek word that we use for heresy (*haireseis*).

Verse 21. *envy...* To have unhappiness for another’s success.

drunkenness, orgies... The first word is, of course, intoxication from drinking too much alcohol, and the second term includes eating too much food. Orgies were events of overindulgence of every kind of sensual pleasure.

and things like these. Paul is telling us that this is a representative list of vices, but not an exhaustive list.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This is a very direct warning that there is a class of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This idea, taken in context of everything Paul has said, can be summarized, “Good works cannot earn salvation but evil works can keep a person from eternal life.”

This does not mean that a person will go to Hell by committing any of the sins above, even though these sins deserve Hell. The phrase above, “those who do such things” is the continuous present tense in Greek. The idea is, “Those who keep doing these things, and live this lifestyle” will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Verse 22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is...*

It is interesting that Paul uses the singular term “fruit.” Perhaps the idea is that all of these qualities fit as some puzzle pieces to a larger whole. Such virtues cluster together when life is lived in the Spirit.

love... The familiar Greek term *agape* is used here. *Agape* is used in the New Testament to define a Christ-centered love of giving and selflessness.

joy... This is related to the word meaning grace. Our joy is both a feeling and an action that is derived from the knowledge and experience of grace in our lives.

peace... Tranquility and harmony that is associated with the presence of God. Often used as a greeting of blessing. In Hebrew the word is *shalom*.

patience... The ability to suffer wrong without taking revenge, and not becoming angry or irritated.

kindness... Many dictionaries say this is the state of being kind. This may not be very satisfying but kindness is well, kindness.

goodness... A preference for doing the right moral action.

faithfulness... As this term is related to the word faith we should likely assume the Apostle is talking about faithfulness to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 23. *gentleness...* A non-demanding spirit that does not require others to behave exactly like the recipient would prefer—grace is given.

self-control... This is the ability to control one’s passions, and it is often used as temperate in the consumption of alcoholic drink.

...against such things there is no law.

Paul has not given us a list of rules, therefore, this is not a matter of law-keeping. The heart given over to the Spirit will produce good fruit. Trying to conjure up good fruit from a dead root is a pointless enterprise.

Verse 24. *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

There is an effort and a behavior of those in Christ to “mortify the flesh” to use an old Puritan idea. It means we kill those parts of our personality that desire to continue to go on sinning. Here the action is on what we do. In Galatians 2:20 the emphasis is on what God has done with us. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.”

Verse 25. *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

The idea is to keep in formation while marching. If we are in the Spirit we are an organic unit living our lives with one Conductor.

Verse 26. *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

When we have an excessively high opinion of ourselves two bad outcomes are possible. First, we feel free to provoke others. Second, we can envy others because we believe we should always be first, or we should be considered correct and therefore rewarded for our thoughts and actions.

