

The Struggle is Real

Goodness and Faithfulness

Galatians 5:16-26

Intro: The struggle is real! After three weeks of examining love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness, it is becoming evident that exhibiting these qualities all the time is not something we can do on our own. However....

- **Legalism:** Strict adherence & obedience to the law will change us!

“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight...” Romans 3:20a

- **Individualism:** It’s about you; just want it more and work harder!

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6b

- **Jesus:** It’s the Holy Spirit inside of you that will produce the fruit!

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” Galatians 5:16-26

Main Idea: The Struggle Is Real, but Goodness and Faithfulness Are Defining Characteristics of the Spirit’s Work.

I. The Flesh Will Always Seek to Serve Self-Interests

Theologian John Stott puts Paul’s list of “works of the flesh” into four categories:

- **The Realm of Sex:** Immorality, impurity & sensuality covers all the ways we are tempted to gratify the flesh through sexual sin.
- **The Realm of Religion:** Idolatry & sorcery address the ways our flesh desires to play God by making gods out of human things.
- **The Realm of Society:** Enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions & envy all point to breakdowns in relationships. It shows that our flesh won’t allow us to have harmonious relationships because of its self-seeking nature.
- **The Realm of Drink:** Drunkenness, orgies & things like these speak to personal excesses that negatively affect others as we gratify our flesh.

“I warn you, as I warned you before (when he was present), that those who do such things (habitual practice, not isolated lapse) will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:21

II. The Spirit Will Always Seek to Serve Christ by Serving Others

- **Goodness:** Love in action, generosity of resources, time, care & concern. Virtuous acts & attitudes that advance the Kingdom of God by benefiting others (Evans). Stingy self-centeredness (me & mine) is a work of the flesh, but generosity of self & resources is a fruit of the Spirit.

“Not any holiness of which you boast, but such ‘goodness’ as other people can see and admire.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon

- **Faithfulness:** The state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed (Elwell). Consistency, perseverance, and dependability (Spurgeon). Reliability of a Christian (Stott). Maintaining faith/allegiance.

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:6-9

“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:9-11

Conclusion: Jesus did not nail your sins to the cross, he allowed himself to be nailed to the cross as just punishment for your sins. He took on himself the pain, suffering, and wrath of God for every sin we committed. In so doing, he took away any excuses we might have for selfishness and sinfulness. We can exhibit goodness and faithfulness by the power of the Holy Spirit because that’s what Jesus purchased with his blood on the cross.

I exhibit goodness because of His goodness on the cross, and I can be faithful because of His faithfulness in saving me.

Invitation: The flesh will always seek to serve self, but the Spirit will always seek to serve Christ by serving others! As we receive Christ by embracing the Gospel, we receive the Spirit of God and can then exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities

NAC: Galatians – Colossians – Max Anders (1999)
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