

GALATIANS 5:13-18

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PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 5:19-26

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“Only the Holy Spirit makes things spiritual. Without Him, “spiritual” activities turn out to be empty piety.”

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GALATIANS 5:7-12

Most people suppose Paul in chapter 5:12 is suggesting the Galatians excommunicate the troublesome Judaizers. The early fathers of the church (Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom), gave these words a far more forceful reading, almost to the point of crudeness. They saw Paul in his anger with the Judaizers and their insistence on circumcision wishing for them total mutilation. In plain fact, that more nearly fits the mood of these verses from chapter 5:7-12. Paul's thoughts suddenly become disjointed. He's baffled in one verse, patient in another, confident in a third, outraged in still another. The moods and the sentences seem to be snatched out of the air.

A public speaker would know what was going on. Paul had lost his place. He forgets for the moment where he is going, what point he wants to make. In that little panic of disorientation he throws out one thought after the other, all pertinent, but not related. He's filling the awkward emptiness with appropriate notions until; like a man groping in the dark, he finds the knob on the door. Finally, he recalls the direction in which he was heading. He focuses again on the goal he is driving toward, and the waters grow calm again.

A moment like that can be extremely revealing and opens up a whole spasm of thoughts which have been hovering near the surface, but were over and over again side-tracked for being too bold, too exposing, too unworthy or just not fitting. If you want to know what thoughts really lurk beyond the carefully crafted presentation, pay close attention when the confused moment comes along. The groping has a lot to say until the path is found again.

So, here you see how hurt and dismayed this strong apostle was down deep inside by the wavering of the Galatian converts. You hear the most mundane Hebrew adage (5:9) by which Paul had been secretly explaining to himself why his “all out” battle with the Judaizers was really called for. You hear the father-mother, “I’m on your side” pep talk (5:10a) turn to anger as the mother bear thinks of the violations done to her little cubs (5:10b). Suddenly, there’s a sentence in 5:11 which says the illogic of those arrayed against him has a dozen answers which he has not as yet brought up. And finally, in exasperation, he lashes out at the scoundrels (5:12).

In there, toward the end, Paul once more catches sight of his goal and remembers his strategy. “Oh yes,” he tells himself, “I’m in the practical section of my letter now. I’ve said all those personal things and covered the whole doctrinal argument. I was just getting started on the down-to-earth issue of all this for my Galatian converts: You have been called to liberty.” We’ve had a little look inside at the man behind the genius. These are precious verses; this little lost interlude. They tell us more, maybe, about Paul than they do about circumcision or grace or works.

What a glory! God takes a fascinating man like Paul, moves him by the Holy Spirit, lets him go, yet holds him close, and inspiring every spontaneous word, has him speak the wondrous works of God, as he is, indeed, the apostle Paul. And you are there.

GALATIANS 5:13-18

It Paul had come into this world some 1,900-2,000 years later than he did, he would have known (and probably used) all the appropriate psychological terms. Chapter 5:17 would have turned into an essay on schizophrenia, with particular attention to the dual person syndrome and its tendency to fracture and destroy the human personality. Just as well, then, that Paul lived when he did and wrote as he was accustomed. When he says, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit...for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” He’s got a handle on a truth with which we’re all familiar, and it doesn’t help to hide it behind fancy terms. Spirit is one thing, and stands for a certain way of life, and flesh is another, also a whole way of life. And these are contradictory to each other. The result is whatever you do; fleshly things or spiritual things, one or the other of those inner selves doesn’t like it. If you serve your fellow man in love, the flesh fellow in you gets all out of joint, feeling sorry for himself, wondering when it gets to be his turn, etc. You know how that works, don’t you? On the other hand, if you give way to the bickering, strife and animal fierceness of the flesh, the Holy Spirit opens the conscience cage and then there’s the devil (just the opposite, really) to pay. You just can’t satisfy the civil war within, can’t do what you want, no matter which way you go.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 5:19-26

Protect me, heavenly Father, from temptation to disbelief and uncertainty. Let these moments spent with You make firm my faith and give strength to my Christian life. Amen.

1. Galatians 5:19-21 – Works of the Flesh (Use more than one translation, if possible)

a. Read Luke 18:9. Who is the active agent on the works or the “law” path of life?

b. List the “works of the flesh” which:

1. Array themselves against chastity.

2. Are irreligious.

3. Which could be included under the phrase “fierce animalism.”

4. Are sins of excess.

c. Which of these “sins of the flesh” do you see in the Christian community today?

d. How then shall we “inherit the kingdom of God”? (Psalms 103:1-12; Romans 5:20-21; 1 John 1:5-9)

2. Galatians 5:22-26 – Fruit of the Spirit

a. Read Ephesians 5:9. Who is the active agent on the grace path of life?

b. List the “fruit of the Spirit” which:

1. Are “virtues enjoyed.”

2. Are “virtues employed.”

3. Produce righteousness (only one).

4. Are “submissive virtues.”

3. Read John 1:12 and Galatians 3:26. Of the fruit of the Spirit, which identifies us with God?

4. What is the peace of God? (Romans 5:1)

5. Describe "meekness." (Matthew 5:5; Luke 6:29)

In what activity does "meekness" serve as a virtue? (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

6. In verse Galatians 5:24, what are we told happens to those who belong to Christ Jesus?

7. How are we freed from "the flesh" with its passions and desires? (Romans 8:1-2)

8. By whose power are we able to walk in the Spirit?

Summarize each verse:

a. John 1:2

b. 2 Timothy 1:7

c. Romans 8:16

9. How can we apply verse 26 to our daily Christian walk? (Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10, 15:2)

10. List the fruit of the Spirit and write the word or thought that each one means to you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

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