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“Paul says simply that those people who walk the grace path in life are like trees rooted in the Holy Spirit, while all the things that those who are on the law path do spring from roots of the flesh.”

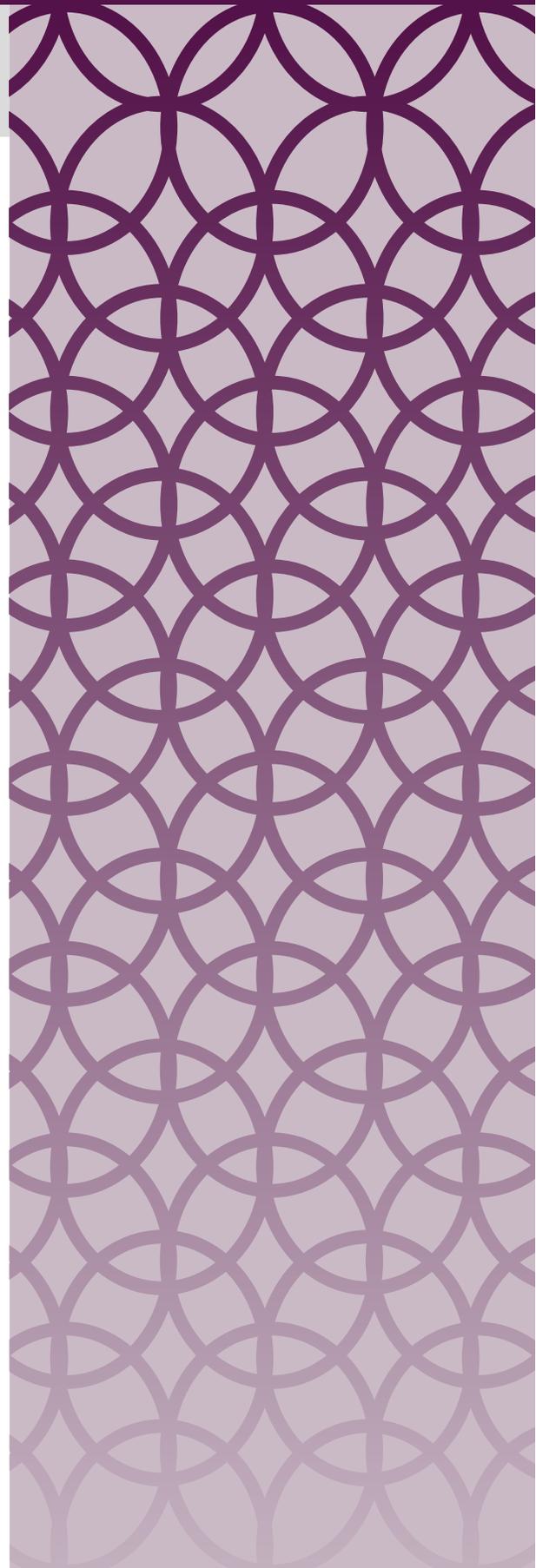
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GALATIANS 5:19-26

A tour of all the little lists which have found their way into the sacred record becomes a fascinating scriptural study. Both the Old and New Testaments are veritable catalogues of sins, rules and family trees. In Exodus 20:3 to chapter 37, you find a list by which you can tick off, one at a time, the various parts of the will of God. In Luke 3:24-38, you find the list of Jesus’ ancestors running right back to Enos, Seth and Adam.

However, none is more helpful, down-to-earth and practical than the two lists in Galatians 5:19-23, particularly the second one. Designed to illustrate in practical terms what is produced by the liberty which is ours “in Christ” as compared to what the bondage of the law comes up with, this second catalogue is a devastating indictment of our cavalier treatment of Christian virtues and our slipshod attention to God’s will and wishes. It is, as well, a recipe if only we would let the Holy Spirit have His way in our day-to-day Christian life for effective and productive congregational, denominational and general Christian endeavor.

In a previous lesson we discussed three proper uses of the law: to curb excessive sinning, to mirror our failures and thus reveal our need for the free forgiveness of Jesus and to guide us into Christ-like activities. Here the suggestion is made that ten minutes every day spent in quiet contemplation of Galatians 5:22-23, using these verses as curb, and mirror and rule, would solve 90% of the problems and overcome 99% of the weaknesses which plague us in our local congregation, in our church body, and in Christendom.



Paul says simply that those people who walk the grace path in life are like trees rooted in the Holy Spirit, while all the things that those who are on the law path do spring from roots of the flesh. And it's the "Spirit tree" which at last turns out bushels of fruit called lawfulness. On the third page of this lesson is a picture portrayed to help you organize Paul's claim. What follows is meant to help you complete that picture portrayal.

Among the roots of the left hand tree write Spirit, and draw a heart with a cross in it. That stands for Christ in you (3:27). Among the roots of the tree on the right, write flesh, and draw a heart with the capital "I" in it. That stands for your efforts to walk the Christian path yourself. These are the choices Paul says the Galatians are pondering.

If one chooses to live as a "Spirit tree", he is at liberty. Write liberty into the trunk of the "Spirit tree" If one chooses to live as a "flesh tree," he is in bondage. Write bondage into the trunk of the "flesh tree." The "Spirit tree" produces fruit marked by love. Write love into the branch of the "Spirit tree." The "flesh tree" produces fruit marked by lust. Write lust into the branch of the "flesh tree." Works of love are works of service. You might identify one of the pieces of fruit on the "Spirit tree" with the word service. The works of lust are described by Paul as works which devour. You might identify one of the pieces of fruit on the "flesh tree" with the word devour. The fruit of the "Spirit tree" can be catalogued under four subdivisions; virtues enjoyed, virtues employed, submissive virtues and the virtue which produces righteousness. These phrases written on the lines in the brackets will identify which are the "fruit of the Spirit." The "Spirit tree," living in liberty, produces fruit of love and service. Put them all into one basket and they spell lawfulness. Mark the basket under the "Spirit tree" lawfulness.

The fruit of the "flesh tree" can be catalogued under four subdivisions; against chastity, irreligious, fierce animalism and fruit of excess. These phrases written in at the brackets will identify which are the works of the flesh. Write one phrase at each bracket and fill in the blank lines. The "flesh tree," living in bondage, produces fruit marked by lust and which devours those with whom it has to do. Put them all into one basket and they spell lawlessness. Mark the basket under the "flesh tree," lawlessness.

It's appropriate, from our point of view, that Paul winds up his catalogues here with reference to another tree, the "tree of the cross" (v. 24), where Christ, by His sacrifice, totally undid the "flesh" tree with its affections and lust. Those who are Christ's, the Christ of the cross, have nothing to do with the way of the flesh and its bondage or the backbiting and strife which goes with it. For us, it's the "Spirit tree," which is to say, the "tree of the cross," the tree of the Christ, the tree where salvation was won for us by Christ, not by ourselves. That's where we have found salvation and that's where we find our daily walk, with Christ.

And that takes care of any by-product of jealousy, envy, pride, any odious comparisons, which might want to insinuate themselves into our basket (v. 26).

After all, our walk with its produce isn't our walk at all, but Christ's, who has redeemed us and empowers us each day. That's how we come by the phrase so easily, "To Him be the glory."

FREEDOM — NOT LICENSE

GALATIANS 5

Won't freedom lead to moral chaos and lawlessness?



PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 6:1-10

My heart, O blessed Savior, rejoices that You have chosen me and written my name in the Book of Life. Teach me Your great and gracious will. Amen.

Galatians 6:1-10

- 1. Verses 2-5 talk about the proper attitude of service and the proper attitude of responsibility.

Read Acts 20:35. In whose interest do we serve?

According to Romans 15:1, whose interest is it not our purpose to serve?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14. How do you relate to “encourage the fainthearted” and “help the weak, be patient”?

Review Ezekiel 18:14-20. In your own words state what God is saying in these verses.

For whose iniquity only are we responsible and on whose iniquity would we do well to concentrate?

Give some reasoning you have heard from people who think someone else is responsible for their actions.

What does 6:2 & 5 say to us about our being responsible?

- 2. Read verses 6, 7 & 8. Is it our works or is it our roots that account for our destiny?

- 3. Carefully study verses 9 and 10. In several sentences, write what these verses say to you and any thoughts you may have gleaned for your Christian living.