

Galatians
“Living Free”
Main Teaching: 1:10-6:10
C. 5:1-6:10 Responded Grace
2. 5:13-26 Power of performance

5:19-21
“Seventeen bad works”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 19-20a Sensual and religious sins

III. Vs. 20b-21 Impersonal and social sins

I. Intro.

Author Phillip Yancy made this observation with regards to this passage and the Sea Gull. *“The seagull is a different bird. Watching one bird fly in majesty is breathtaking but watch that same gull as he dive-bombs into a group of gulls, provoking a flurry of scattered feathers and angry squawks to steal a tiny morsel of meat. The concepts of sharing and manners do not exist among gulls. They are so fiercely competitive and jealous that if you tie a red ribbon around the leg of one gull, making him stand out, you sentence him to execution. The others in the flock will furiously attack him with claws and beaks, hammering through feathers and flesh to draw blood. They'll continue until he lies flattened in a bloody heap.”* Such is the difference between “*the works of the flesh*” and the “*Fruit of the Spirit*”. **Paul reveals three works of the Holy Spirit that he exhorts these Galatians to walk in:**

1. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to fulfill the law through love
2. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to overcome the flesh as we are preoccupied with the goodness of God
3. The Holy Spirit enables the believer to produce Spiritual Fruit that is both a blessing to others as well as beneficial to the believer

II. Vs. 19-20a Sensual and religious sins

Vs. 19-21a Paul lists 17 specific works of the flesh that walking in the Spirit enables us to overcome. In verse 17 Paul had written about the battle between our two hard drives in every believer. This battle is inward but the results of this invisible battle are outwardly evident. **We can't see our inward old nature but we can see what it does.** A general observation of these **17 things will reveal four categories that though not exhaustive** do supply an adequate list. While having 17 “*bad words*” there is also a list 9 “*good words*” which points out that the human language is always more loaded towards evil than it is good.

1. **Sensual sins: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness and lewdness:** We are appalled at the sexual immorality of our day, but Paul wrote in a day where things were far worse. *“The sexual life of the Greco-Roman world at the time of the New Testament was sheer chaos and the evidence of this fact has come not from Christian writers but from the non-Christian who was disgusted with the unspeakable sexual immorality.”*
 - a. ***Adultery:*** This word isn't included in the list of many ancient manuscripts, so translations like the NIV don't include it. Adultery is violating the marriage covenant by sexual immorality and the bottom line is The Holy Spirit never led anyone into adultery.
 - b. ***Fornication:*** In the Greek the word is *porneia*, and it speaks of sexual immorality in a broad sense. Webster's dictionary defines fornication as *“Voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons or two persons not married to each other.”* Paul calls sex before and outside of marriage –fornication and at this time it was so widespread that it was apparently accepted as **a normal part of life**. The Word of God doesn't

accept this view as the Holy Spirit never led anyone into fornication. Adultery and fornication are **understood in relation to marriage**. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary uses this definition: "*The social institution under which a man and woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife by legal commitments, religious ceremonies, etc.*" Many want the benefits of marriage without the commitment of marriage. The Bible has a word for that: fornication.

- c. ***Uncleanness***: Uncleanness refers to the opposite of purity. The word for uncleanness is general enough to let us know that all of these things are works of the flesh. It covers impure speech, or suggestive speaking filled with double meanings.
 - d. ***Lewdness***: Lewdness has the idea of "*ready to sin at any time.*" It speaks of someone who flaunts their immorality, throwing off all restraint and having no sense of shame, propriety, or embarrassment. The chief characteristic of lewdness is a bad person usually tries to hide their sin; but the lewd person no longer cares how much they shock public opinion so long as they can gratify their desires.
2. **Religious sins: Idolatry and sorcery**: These are sins of worship, and remind us that it isn't only tragic to worship the wrong God, or seek the wrong spiritual power – it is sinful as well.
- a. ***Idolatry***: Idolatry is the worship of any god except the LORD God revealed to us by the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. Idolatry is simply putting things ahead of God. The Christian who devotes more of himself to his car, house, or boat than he does to serving Christ may be in danger of idolatry.
 - b. ***Sorcery***: Sorcery is also translated witchcraft and is the service and worship of occult and spiritual powers apart from the true God. Paul uses the word "*pharmakeia*", which

we get our word for “*pharmacy*.” In the ancient world, the taking of drugs (especially hallucinogens) was always associated with the occult, and the Bible’s association with drug taking and sorcery points out that drugs open up doors to the occult that are better left closed.

III. Vs. 20b-21 Impersonal and social sins

3. **Interpersonal sins**: *Hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions and heresies*. These sins primarily express themselves in how we treat others. God cares about moral purity, but He is also passionate about how we treat one another. The fact that Paul uses more words to describe these interpersonal sins shows how important our treatment of each other is to God.
 - a. ***Hatred***: Hatred is the inner motivation for the ill treatment of others. The word expresses an attitude of heart that expresses itself in actions such as contentions, outbursts of wrath.
 - b. ***Contentions***: Originally, this word had to do with the rivalry which has found its outcome in quarrelling’s and wrangling. Most commonly it is translated as strife and speaks of a combative and argumentative spirit.
 - c. ***Jealousies***: Sometimes this word is used in a positive sense - as for being zealous for something good. But here, in this context it means “*the desire to have what someone else has*.”
 - d. ***Outbursts of wrath***: This word speaks of a sudden flash of anger, not a settled state of anger. It means to lose your temper, being unable to control your anger.

- e. ***Selfish ambitions***: This word has an interesting history. It started out meaning “*to work for pay*” in time it meant work that is done for no other reason than money. Finally it was used to describe politicians who campaign for election, for what they can get for their own glory and benefit. It is the heart of a person whose first question is always, “*What’s in it for me?*”
- f. ***Dissensions***: This word literally means “*standing apart.*” And describes a society . . . where the members fly apart instead of coming together.
- g. ***Heresies***: The word originally meant “*to choose*” but came to mean someone who divisively expressed their “choices” or opinions. We think today of heresies in terms of wrong ideas and teachings; but the emphasis is actually the wrongful dividing over opinions. Barclay said, “*There is all the difference in the world between believing that we are right and believing that everyone is wrong. Unshakable conviction is a Christian virtue; unyielding intolerance is a sin.*”
4. **Social sins: *Envy, murder, drunkenness, revelries and the like*:**
- a. ***Envy***: The word means being bitter just because someone else has something and we don’t. The Stoics called this “*grief because of someone else’s good*”!
- b. ***Murder***: This word is not in every ancient text, but murder is a work of the flesh, and that the Holy Spirit never led anyone into murders!
- c. ***Drunkenness***: Christians may differ on if a Christian can drink alcohol but what is not debatable is that the Scriptures forbid drunkenness. Being impaired in any way by drink or drinking with the intention of becoming impaired, is sin.
- d. ***Revelries***: The word doesn’t mean having a party or a good time. It means unrestrained partying. Barclay says, “*The kind of party which lowers a man’s self and*

is a nuisance to others.” The fact that Paul includes these two sins in his list shows that they were works of the flesh that the Galatian Christians had to be on guard against.

“***And the like***”, these words demonstrate that Paul understands that his list is not exhaustive. It isn’t as if you can find a work of the flesh not covered here you are free to do it! “*The early church was not made up of people whose pre-Christian lives were of the highest standard but Paul reminds his readers that whatever kind of sin they had favored in their pre-Christian days they must be abandoned.*”

Vs. 21b The danger of the works of the flesh isn’t just a path of destruction; if continued without repentance it could reveal where you will spend eternity. Paul preached salvation by God’s grace but he also taught that those who are saved by God’s grace have an obligation to live it in consistent living. The verb tense for “*practice*” is in the present which indicates a habitual continual sin and not an isolated lapse. Paul is not talking about an *act* of sin, but a *habit* of sin. Boice said, “*Those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God’s Spirit.*” What is the outcome of such habitual continually practice sin? “*They will not inherit the kingdom of God!*” Charles Spurgeon said, “*The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.*” The idea isn’t that a Christian could never commit these sins, but that they could never stay in these sins. Martin Luther said, “*Those who sin through weakness are not denied pardon as long as they rise again and cease to sin.*”