

# Works of the Flesh

Gal. 5:16-21

-part 1-

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"But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would, but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5: 16-21).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these..

Manifest: made known, thus conspicuous before the eyes of men so that all can see for themselves.

Which are these..

That is, these in the list belong to the class called the flesh. It seems that the sins here mentioned fall into four groups: (1) Sensuality - fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness; (2) Unlawful things in the spiritual realm - Idolatry, sorcery; (3) Forms of discord - enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings; (4) Intemperate excesses - drunkenness, reveling; and perhaps a fifth - and such like things. It should be obvious that this long list falls short of the infinite varieties of sin.

Fornication:

The word "fornication" refers to sexual immorality in general. It is defined in the lexicons as, "prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." - Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 699-700. ". . . properly of illicit sexual intercourse in general." - Thayer, pp. 531-532. "Moulton and Milligan say of the first century meaning of porneia as used in the papyri literature: 'porneia which is rare in classical Greek originally meant 'prostitution,' 'fornication,' but came to be applied to unlawful sexual intercourse generally.'" Maurice W. Lusk, III, Your Marriage Can Be Great, p 105.

From the above definitions - a person is guilty of fornication when he/she engages in pre-marital sex (1 Cor 7:2-5). Adultery (illicit sex in which one party is the spouse of another) is a specific form of sexual immorality included in the term fornication. The participation in sex by homosexuals and lesbians would fall under the term fornication. Incest also is fornication. The person who puts away his or her spouse for a cause other than fornication and marries another commits fornication. The person who marries the put away spouse (the one put away for a cause other than fornication) commits fornication. So also is he/she held guilty who puts away his/ her spouse for a cause other than fornication, because he/she is the cause of the guilt of the put away spouse when he/she remarries. (Matt 5:32).

Uncleanness:

In this word "uncleanness" there are perhaps three ideas expressed: (1) Physical and material dirt. The word is used to describe the condition that an outgoing tenant is to leave the house free from, that is, free from uncleanness. (2) In the Greek Old Testament the word is used to denote physical, ritual and ceremonial impurity. When a person became unclean either in the physical, ritual or ceremonial sense, he could not approach God. He could not enter the temple, or share in its worship. (3) It also indicates moral impurity which is inconsistent with personal purity. Embraced in the word is whatever is defiling, contaminating or impure in look, in gesture, in dress, in thought or sentiment. When the heathen of Romans one became vain in their imaginations, "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves," (Rom. 1:24). It is used to indicate the lewdness of Gomer, the immoral wife of Hosea (see Hosea 2:10).

The New Testament informs us that no unclean person "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5: 5). Also, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." (2 Pet. 2:9-10). No Christian

should forget that, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (I Thess. 4:7).

Lasciviousness:

The word translated "lasciviousness" is defined as "unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence .... lasciviousness: 2 Cor. 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 2 Pet. 2:7 plur. 'wanton (acts or) manners' as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of male and females, etc." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon. "Lewd, lustful, that which is intending to produce lewd emotions; suiting or proceeding from unlawful sexual desire." - Webster's New International Dictionary.

It seems that Lasciviousness has to do with: (1 ) wanton and undisciplined action - the action of a man who is at the mercy of his passions and his impulses and emotions, and in whom the voice of calm reason has been silenced by the storm of self will; (2) shameless conduct - an act of a character which has lost its self-respect, and its sense of shame in that it is indifferent to public opinion and to public decency; (3) activities and/or conduct that tends to excite lustful desires; (4) vulgar acts or manners a "filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of the body.

The word "Lasciviousness" is found nine times in the New Testament. It is usually used in connection with sexual sins or activities of a lustful nature. In the text before us (Gal 5:19-21) it is coupled with fornication and uncleanness. In 1 Peter 4:1-6 it is used to describe the course of life followed by the Gentiles before their conversion to Christ. In 2 Peter 2:7 it is used to describe the kind of life being lived in Sodom before its destruction by God for unrighteousness. In Rom. 13:13-14 it is listed among such activities as reveling, drunkenness, chambering (most likely referring to prostitution), and wantonness. 2 Peter 2:18 speaks of it as the means used by some to entice newly born Christians to return to living in error. Jude 4 speaks of some, who of old turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness as being ungodly men under condemnation. In Eph. 4:18-19 those who gave themselves up to lasciviousness did so because of their ignorance and hardness of heart which resulted in their working all uncleanness and greediness or covetousness. In 2 Cor. 12:21 lasciviousness is joined with fornication and uncleanness as sins which are to be repented of and Paul mourned because of those who sinned and had not repented.

As a footnote to this brief analysis of lasciviousness we should note that dancing as it is engaged in today, is without doubt, lasciviousness. It contains indecent bodily movements, provides for the unchaste handling of males and females ("I will say that I do believe a woman cannot waltz virtuously and waltz well, for she must yield her person completely to her

partner." - Professor Harry Stribes, renowned champion dancer), and tends toward that which is lewd, producing lustful thoughts and evil desires. ". . . there is left but one reason for the popularity of the dance, and that is sex appeal. I hasten to assure you that I do not believe the dancers are always conscious that this is the reason they enjoy this position and the steps that go with it. But this lack of consciousness is merely an added factor of danger." Professor J. Louis Guyon, a former owner and operator of one of Chicago's largest dance halls.

Idolatry:

Idol is defined as, "An image, likeness . . . the image of a heathen god . . . a false god," Thayer, p.174.

W.E. Vine defines Idol as, "an image to represent a false god . . . the false god worshipped in an image," p.583. Idolatry denotes the worship of deity in a visible form, whether the images to which homage is paid are symbolical representation of the true God (Ex. 20:3-5), or of the false divinities which have been made the objects of worship in his stead. In Old Testament times the neighbors of Israel, God's chosen people, all had their idols. The Philistines had Dagon. The Ekronites had Baalzebub. The Moabites had Chemosh. The Ammonites had Molech or Milcom. The Phoenicians had Astarte. The Canaanites had Baal and Astoreth. Idolatry was also a problem continually with Israel from the golden calf of Aaron (Ex. 32), the practice of idolatry by Solomon (I Kings 11 :1-8), Jereboam's two calves of gold (I Kings 12:28-29) which all the kings of the northern kingdom condoned and continued, to the final carrying away of Israel by the Assyrians because of her sins, of which idolatry was one. In Judah there were the bad kings which introduced and practiced idolatry. The reforms of the good kings of the southern kingdom always included the destruction of idolatry. However, it seems that Judah learned her lesson, for when she returned from the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, idolatry was not characteristic of her sins. However, the Gentiles continued the practice during the early days of the church. Paul spoke to them saying: "Forasmuch then as we are the off-spring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts I 7:29).

Idolatry may also be defined as anything that comes between man and God. Or better yet, anything that occupies the place in the heart of man that God should occupy. It was for this reason that Paul said that covetousness was idolatry (Eph. 5:5). Today, few would bow to an image of stone, or steel wrought by man's device. But many do practice idolatry by letting other things occupy the place God should occupy in the heart. How many bow to strong drink, sinful pleasures, drugs, etc. These are inherently wrong and

sinful. The "tree out of the forest" that Jeremiah spoke of was not inherently sinful, yet when it became the Astoreth and men bowed before the works of their hands it became sinful. Fishing poles, golf clubs, boats, camping, etc. are not inherently sinful, but when they come between an individual and his/her service to God, they are as sinful as Baal. Baal could not deliver any from the wrath to come, neither can covetousness or any other idol of today.

Sorcery:

The original word from which sorcery or witchcraft (KJV) is translated is "pharmakeia" It is also the word from which our word "pharmacy" is derived. It is defined as: "primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then, poisoning; then, sorcery, Gal.5:20. . .In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulet, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer." - W. F. Vine.

It seems that there are three stages to the meaning of pharmakeia (1) for the medical use of drugs for healing as prescribed by a physician; (2) the misuse of drugs to poison and not to cure; (3) a vicious and malignant dealing in witchcraft and sorcery.

Witchcraft, sorcery and its related activities may be identified as:

Magic - We do not have in mind the stage magician who seeks to entertain an audience by slight of hand or other tricks. We do have in mind one who by the use of secret incantations, charms amulets, drugs, special exercises or by other means tries to tap supernatural beings or non physical forces to influence them for his benefit. The use of white magic to help someone, black magic to hurt; the evil eye or protection from it. Some Bible references to magic are Gen. 41:8,16,24,25,28; Ex. 7:11,22, 8:7, 18-19; 2 Kings 9:22; Dan. 2:2,10-11,12,27-30; 5:11-12; Nah. 3:4; Acts 8:9; 13:8 as well as the text under consideration. The magicians in contrast to Moses had limited success in the beginning but subsequently were exposed as outstanding failures. In the book of Daniel, when put to the test over and over again they failed at every test. The New Testament mentions magicians without once giving credibility to their claims.

Necromancy - consultation with the dead for the purpose of receiving information. The supposed occurrence takes various forms: The deceased may appear; the spirit of the dead may possess a living person; the dead may speak through a medium, the sorcerer; or in various other ways limited

only by the imagination of the sorcerer and the credulity of the seeker. This is spoken of in Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:7; 1 Chron. 10:13-14; and Isa. 8:19. This forbidden practice is useless a source of information. (See also, Eccl. 9:1-6).

Astrology - "The pseudo science which treats of the influences of the stars upon human affairs, and of foretelling terrestrial events by their positions and aspects." - Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. The astrologer then would be one who seeks information about an individual's decisions, plans, future and fortunes by charting the stars and planets in connection with the moment of birth and life. Not only is this forbidden, it is useless as a source of council. Some passages are: Deut.17:2-5, Isa. 47:12-14; and Jer. 10:2.

Divining: The effort to tap some power or spirit so as to discover hidden knowledge, especially to be able to foretell the future or to obtain some special information. Observing times, or interpreting omens, portents, and chance events belong under divining. Ezekiel pictures them as consulting images and looking into the liver to discover the hidden knowledge. Sometimes spirits are called, arrows shot, or special divining rods used. Some passages are: Lev.19:2; Deut. 18:10,14; 1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Kings 21 :6; Isa. 2:6; 44:25; Jer. 27:9; 29:8-9; Ezek. 21:21-22; Dan. 2:27; 4:7; 5:7,11; Hos. 4:12; Mic. 5:12; Acts I6:16.

God's instruction to Israel as they were about to enter the promised land included, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, " Deut.18:10-12.

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