

WORKS OF THE FLESH

Continued from last month,

by Danny Brown

This I say then, Walk in 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: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:16-21, KJV).

The sins here mentioned seem to 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, revellings; and perhaps a fifth - and such like things. We have looked at those things listed in 1 and 2 [in the last issue of EF], now we will briefly notice the sins listed in 3. Forms of discord and 4. Intemperate excesses.

ENMITIES

The word translated “Enmity” has been translated by a variety of words; such as: hatred, enmity, quarrels, quarreling, hostile or hostility, feud, mutual enmity, etc. To hate indicates malicious and unjustifiable feelings toward others, whether toward the innocent or by mutual animosity. In 1 John 3:15, he who hates his brother is called a murderer, for the sin lies in the inward disposition, of which the act is the outward expression.

The word translated “Enmity” is used only five times in the New Testament. Here in Gal. 5:20 as a work of the flesh. In Luke 23:12 of Herod and Pilate. In Rom. 8:7 we are told that the mind of the flesh is enmity with God. Eph. 2:14,16 reveals that Jesus abolished the enmity between man and God by His sacrifice. James 4:4 says, “Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of

God.”

STRIFE

The word translated “Strife” is also translated by the words “variance” (KJV) and “contention”. Strife or variance is the expression of hatred or enmity. Enmity is the state or attitude of mind toward other people; and strife is the outcome in actual life of that state of mind. (see Factions)

JEALOUSIES

“The root word in the Greek is *zelos*, from which the word *zeal* is derived. It may have either a good or a bad connotation, depending on the context. In Gal. 3:20 it is used in the bad sense — that of envious rivalry. Vine says, ‘jealousy desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself.’ Barclay says, ‘*zelos* could denote a great thing which degenerated into a sin.’ To observe the achievements of another can stir within one the desire to ‘emulate’ or ‘imitate’ with a view to achieving the same worthwhile thing in oneself. But if the same ambition, good at first, should provoke to a bitter resentment then *zelos* becomes a work of the flesh. This deterioration of zeal is not the work of the Spirit but of the flesh.” - J. Wilely Adams

Jealousies, also translated emulations, is the feeling of ill will at the good fortune of another. It is destructive of personal relations and individual happiness. This pain springs not from the fact that the beholder does not possess the fine thing (a possession, an honor, a characteristic, etc); it springs from the fact that the other person does.

WRATHS

The characteristic feature of the word translated “wrath” is that it is very violent but very brief. The Greeks said this wrath was like fire in straw, quickly blazing up and just as quickly burning itself out. Wrath, as it is here used, is not long cherished anger, it is the blaze of temper which flares into violent words and deeds, and just as quickly dies.

There are several scriptures that reveal to us the attitude we ought to have toward wrath:

I. “Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put

away from you with all malice” (Eph 4:31).

2. Jesus said, “that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement” (Matt. 5 :22).

3 . “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20).

4. “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath . .” (Eph. 6:4).

“Many a person is well aware that he has a violent temper; and many a person claims that he cannot help it, and expects others to accept and to forgive his bursts of passion. . . . It may well be that such a person is never fully aware of the way in which he wounds others and produces a situation in which fellowship becomes very difficult. Because he blazes and forgets the things that others should equally be able to forget the pain he has inflicted. Let such a person remember that such displays of temper are sin, and that the way to overcome them is through the power of the Spirit in his heart” (that is as the Spirit teaches through His word. -DB) - William Barclay

FACTIONS

The American Standard Version used the word “faction,” while in other translations we find such words as strife, selfishness, selfish ambitions, intrigues and rivalry. W. E. Vine defines the word as “strife, contention in the expression of enmity, Rom. 1:29.” Thayer defines it as “contention, strife, wrangling.” The word denotes a spirit of personal ambition and rivalry which issues in a partisanship or faction which sets party or personal ambition above service to Christ. Paul exhorted the Romans not to walk “in strife and envying” (Rom. 13:13). He was fearful of returning to Corinth “lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings,” (2 Cor 12:20). To the Philippians he wrote: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). He wrote to Timothy to warn those who are “proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings” (I Tim. 6:4). James speaks of the fruit that comes from strife, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, hut is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:14-16). The wise man Solomon said, “It is an honour for a man to cease from strife:” (Proverbs 20:23).

DIVISIONS

William Barclay says, “The word denotes a state of things in which men are divided, in which feuds flourish, and in which unity is destroyed.” He further states, “It literally means ‘a standing apart’, that is, a state in which all community, all fellowship, and all togetherness are gone.” W. E. Vine defines the word as “A standing apart (diche, asunder, apart, stasis, a standing; the root di — indicating division, is found in many words in various languages).”

Jesus prayed, “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me.” (John 17:20) Paul plead for unity among the believers, “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgement” (I Cor 1:10). The Holy Spirit, through Paul revealed a plan for unity that brethren not be divided, “giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.” (Eph 4:3-6). Division does not happen as a result of being led by the Spirit, it is a work of the flesh. “These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit.” (Jude 19). Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them.” (Rom. 16:17).

PARTIES

Other translations translate the word by heresies, party spirit, party quarrels, and factions. W. E. Vine says it “denotes a choosing, choice; then, that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects, Gal.5:20.” Throughout the book of Acts (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5,14; 26:5; 28:22) the word is translated “sect”. The sectarian or denominational view of the church that Jesus bought with His blood is not the Bible view. Every figure used to reveal some aspect of the church indicates a unity or oneness. The church is viewed as a “fold” and Jesus said there is one fold. It is viewed as a kingdom in which all who are born again serve the king, Jesus. It is viewed as a family, the family of God. It is viewed as a body, one body, with each individual being a member. It is pictured as a vineyard with members as workers in that vineyard. Every figure destroys the

contention that the church is to be divided into a multitude of sects each holding a peculiar doctrine and wearing a different name. The sectarian view is a work of the flesh and not the Spirit.

ENVYINGS

Envy has been defined as a feeling of displeasure and ill will because of another's advantages, honor, possessions, etc. William Barclay comments, "The essence of it is that it does not describe the spirit which desires, nobly or ignobly, to have what someone else has; it describes the spirit which grudges the fact that the other person has these things at all. It does not so much want the things for itself; it merely wants to take them from the other person." Solomon compared envy in the spiritual realm to what cancer is in the physical realm. He said, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30).

Envy has been the cause of some of the most terrible tragedies that have occurred. Because of envy, Cain committed the first murder and that of his brother. (Gen.4:4,5). The brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery because of their envious heart. (Acts 7:9). Saul, Israel's first king, became so envious of David that he hunted him like an animal with evil intentions. (I Sam.18:8-9). The gospel has been preached with envy by some who sought to add to the afflictions of a faithful preacher. (Phil . 1:] 5- 16). Envy has been an impetus for persecution of the followers of Christ (Acts 13:45). The strife and divisions of the church in Corinth can in a large measure be laid at the feet of envy. (1 Cor. 3:3). A deed even more terrible is recorded in Matt. 27:18, "For he (Pilate) knew that for envy they had delivered him (Jesus) up."

Asaph's story in the 73rd Psalm ought to help us put the right perspective on envy. Though he is dealing with just one specific reason for envy and its possible consequences and showing the reason, in this circumstance, one should not be characterized by envy. It should help us to know that if we opened our eyes to the whole truth we would learn that envy ought not to be an attitude we manifest. Here is his story.

"But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression;

They speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them. And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me-- Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction." (Psa. 73:2-18, NKJV).

DRUNKENNESS

Paul said plainly, "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." (Eph 5:18). Peter points out that the Christian does not now run to the same riot of excess that formerly characterized his behavior. "For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them in the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: " (I Pet. 4: 3 4).

Jesus said, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 16-21).

Notice the moral and spiritual effects or the fruit of drunkenness:

1. Maladministration of justice - Prov 31:5; Isa. 5:23.
2. Provokes anger, contentions, brawling - Prov. 20:1; 23:29.
3. Conduces a profligate life - Eph 5:1~.
4. Is allied with gambling, licentiousness - Joel 3:3 and indecency - Gen 9:21ff.
5. Deadens the spiritual sensibilities, producing a callous indifference to religious influences and destroys all serious thought - Isa 5 :12.

“Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat; For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice. My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, And a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, And increases the unfaithful among men. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper.” (Prov. 23:20-32, NKJV).

REVELLINGS

This word “revellings” is used in only two other passages in the New Testament besides out text. It is used in Rom. 13:13 “Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy” and also in 1 Peter 4:3, “For the time past in our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”

Webster's collegiate dictionary defines the word as, “To be festive in a riotous or noisy manner.” Thayer says, “. . . a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends; hence used generally, of feast and drinking-parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry:” Donnegan's Lexicon says, “A jovial assembly of friends, who met at an entertainment, or to celebrate a festival, with music, dancing, and singing hymns and odes - a band of revellers, who, after a feast, go through the streets and visit their friends, or mistresses, singing, dancing, and indulging in wanton and boisterous merriment; hence revelry, and the wanton conduct of persons elated with wine; licentious indulgence.”

Unfortunately, much of the entertainment of the day involves merrymaking with others wherein divine limitations are ignored, loud sensual suggestive and

provocative music, drinking, and other forms of carnal pleasure. Such is classed as revelling.

“THEY . . . SHALL NOT INHERIT
THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

We rejoice to see so many righteous souls that are warring effectively against the flesh and are producing the fruit of the Spirit. However, we are saddened when we see those who profess to be children of God loosing the battle against the flesh. With the rise of emphasis on sensuality, premarital and extramarital sexual relations are claiming some. Uncleaness and lascivious doings are the cause of others departing from the faith. Today, surprising as it is, we are being exposed to liberal doses of idolatry and sorcery. Oriental cults and Satan worship are becoming more common, especially among high school and college groups. Even more insidious are the things that cause discord: enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings. Somehow these sins, since they have to do with attitudes and resultant consequences, are bad but not too bad and are relegated to naughty misdemeanors. As a result many excuse themselves and others even attempt to justify the practice. Those who are loosing this war and those who see it as inconsequential along with those who are just drifting along sort of lackadaisical need to wise up, wake up, repent of their sins, live and act so as to honor Him who died for us. Remember those who loose this war shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:12-13).

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