

26 FEB 2012

TWO LIFE CHOICES - FLESH, OR SPIRIT

Gal 5:22-26, 6:1-10

PRODUCT OF THE SPIRIT

5:22), 23) "But" suggests a stark contrast to come between the acts of the flesh & the fruit of the Spirit. This nine-fold cluster of the Spirit's fruit should characterize the life of every believer in Jesus Christ. Love - not a feeling, but a decision to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of another, not counting the cost or any possible return on the investment; joy - not fleeting, circumstance-based happiness, but an abiding gladness because I belong to Jesus; peace - not just the absence of conflict or hostility, but a quietness of soul and harmony with God and circumstances; patience - when provoked, I don't strike back; kindness - I am benevolent, even to enemies; goodness - an upright soul, opposite of malevolent; faithfulness - reliable; gentleness - considerate in discipline; self-control - mastery of self in the appetites of the flesh. No law can be made against these things

PUTTING TO DEATH THE FLESH

24) We are not compelled to follow the sin nature, for we have crucified it; crucified with Christ, my old man has been rendered inoperative; only in unbelief and disobedience do I give him leave to act. A man in a coffin has no passions or desires. We must reckon, consider, our old nature to be in such a coffin. The new man rules! This is very much like his personal testimony of death and new life in Christ, found in chapter 2 verse 20.

25) As children, we obey the parents that brought us into the world, or at least we should. Just as God's Spirit gave us life through regeneration, so we should follow - "Keep in step with" - Him now. Again we are reminded of the similar means of salvation and sanctification. He gives us life, He gives us leading. It is ours to follow Him.

26) The fleshly walk, described in verses 19 - 21, will tend to conceit, which produces envy, strife, and division. Conversely. The Holy Spirit in our lives will produce humility in us, a trait which tends toward unity.

The wise man, Solomon, wrote that, "By pride cometh contention." By humility cometh unity (Phil 2). The choice is clear.

PARTNERSHIP - HELPING THE WEAK

6:1) In the life of the body, sometimes a brother falls into sin. Legalists will pounce upon such a one & use him as an example of their fervor in dealing with sin. The job of those more mature in Christ is to help offenders to be restored. This must be done with great care, knowing that none of us are exempt from sin ourselves.

2) The failure that caused one to need restoration can become a real burden to that brother. When we believers assist our weaker brother with his load, we are fulfilling Christ's law of love. Love does not kick the wounded; it rather reaches down to them, offering a helping hand, reminding them of Christ. This was how Jesus lived.

3) Paul returns to the matter of pride, a man thinking he is more than he is. Such thinking is self-deceptive, & it is not born of the Spirit. A spiritual man knows his lowliness, his weakness, his nothingness apart from Christ. In our ministry with the homeless we meet men who are humble, acknowledging their fall. We meet proud men, who blame others for their circumstance. It is the humble man who can slowly, but surely, climb back on top.

4) Pride looks at others & says, "I am better." There is no place for such in the life of a true believer. In a more proper introspection, the spiritual believer objectively examines his own deeds. He compares himself to Christ, not to another man, & then he can have some sense of satisfaction in what God has done in and through him. He does not boast about how he is better than others. He rejoices that day by day he is becoming more like Jesus

5) In verse two a heavy, crushing load is to be shared. Here, a lighter burden is to be borne alone. Verse two describes teamwork. Verse 5 speaks of each man on the team fulfilling his own assignment. The load here is like Jesus' load in Matt 11:30. It is the pack a soldier carried when

marching. There is no contradiction between the instruction to share the loads of others (vs 2) and the personal responsibility and accountability meant here.

6) Students are responsible to share with their teachers materially as the teachers share with them spiritually. The principle of not muzzling the ox who is grinding the grain (Deut 25:4, 1 Tim 5:18) instructs us that pastors and other vocational Christian workers have a right to be compensated for their ministry among the saints. The OT priests earned their living in their priestly duties. Were the Galatians being stingy with their church leaders?

PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING

7), 8) Here is an eternal principle, that of sowing & reaping. We reap in kind as we sow. If we sow to the sinful desires of the flesh, our harvest will be rotten flesh. If we sow to the Spirit of God, we shall from the Spirit reap things pertaining to life eternal. Now is the time to sow, later is the time to reap. If we seek reward here and now, we shall have nothing to rejoice in later. May we live life each day with this principle in mind. How blessed...!

9) Sometimes people say, "I am tired of doing right. It does not pay off." Such attitude betrays a misunderstanding of God's timing. Now is not the time for reaping - today is not payday. Also, doing right should be its own present reward. We are servants of the eternal God, not short-term investors looking for an immediate dividend. 10) Acts five showed the folly of "Christian communism." Those believers found themselves later needing support from the young, newly planted missionary churches. While communism always fails, proper, love-induced sharing is commanded. Many opportunities will present themselves to us to minister to others in material ways. Those are important demonstrations of our love for Christ and for His body. Let us be faithful to share with the needy.