

Review Questions (Lesson #17)

Answer T for true, F for false

1. The church is portrayed in the Bible as the body of Christ and the temple of God.
2. Arguing is always wrong.
3. Jealousy and envy are the same thing.
4. The first effect of beverage alcohol is to dull the sense of right and wrong.
5. Cain murdered his brother Abel because of hatred and envy.

Give short answers:

1. Whom did Paul warn in Acts 20 about the dangers of selfish ambition?
2. Concerning believers, for what did Jesus pray in John 17:20-21?
3. What do Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26 teach that we should do instead of envying people?
4. Those who practice the works of the flesh will miss out on what eternal blessing?
5. Revelries (wild parties) are associated in the New Testament with what two behaviors?

Fill in the blanks:

1. _____-minded people seek to promote _____, not _____.
2. Jesus prayed for _____ based on _____, not _____ based on _____ and _____.
3. One who is _____ according to the _____ has no interest in even approaching a state of _____.
4. “And such were some of you. But you were _____, you were _____, you were _____ in the name of the _____ and _____ of our _____.”
5. Paul the apostle did not agree that the _____ is a _____, but acknowledged that he served _____ “according to the _____ which *they call* a _____.”

Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

Lesson #17 The Works of the Flesh, #2 (Galatians 5:19-21)

This lesson continues the study of the “works of the flesh.” Having dealt with four sins of sexual immorality (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness), as well as two religious sins (idolatry and sorcery), we now turn to seven sins of disposition (5:19-20):

Hatred (enmity) is extreme hostility. This attitude looks upon others as enemies. In fact, the word is used twice in the New Testament in direct contrast to friendship. Governor Pilate and King Herod “had been at enmity with each other” (i.e. had hated each other), but “became friends” (Luke 23:12). And James 4:4 tells us that “friendship with the world is enmity with God.” Such hatred is the polar opposite of the love Jesus demonstrated and commanded.

Contentions means strife and wrangling. People who are governed by the flesh relish the prospect of a dispute. They argue simply to prove “I’m right and you’re wrong!” Spiritual people will argue vigorously when the situation calls for it (Jesus did, see Matthew 22:23-33); but they are peaceable by nature and do not go looking for controversy. Scripture teaches us to avoid foolish arguments (see 1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:9).

Jealousies pertain to the selfish desire to keep what one has. It is not the same as envy (discussed later), though the two words are often confused with each other. Sometimes jealousy is good. A husband should be jealous of his wife, in that he is unwilling to share her affections with other men. God is jealous in that He is unwilling to share the devotion of His people with idols (Exodus 20:5). But in the context of Galatians 5 we would think of one who is unwilling to share material wealth with the needy, or a church elder who focuses on guarding his power rather than serving the flock.

Outbursts of wrath are sudden displays of hot passion. Such explosive behavior is expected when, for example, you try to take a bone away from a dog. But we expect better manners from humans! Fleshly-minded people may take a certain pride in being hot-tempered. The spiritually-minded, however, will exercise self-control (to be discussed further in a subsequent lesson on the Fruit of the Spirit).

Selfish Ambition pertains to self-promotion – the winning of a personal following, often by dishonest and deceptive means. In secular

literature, this word is used of politicians electioneering in unfair ways. It is from the same root word as “hireling,” indicating again the corrupt motives that are involved. Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus that “from among yourselves men will arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30). Spiritually-minded people seek to promote Jesus, not themselves!

Dissensions are divisions, especially those created within the church. Such division comes about as a result of hatred, contention, and selfish ambition (see above). Jesus prayed that believers in Him would be unified (John 17:20-21), and division within the church is strictly prohibited (1 Corinthians 1:10). The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), and “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4). The church is also portrayed as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16), and dividing the church is equated with destroying it. “If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:17).

Heresies also pertain to divisions – the choosing up of sides based on some personality, a false doctrine, or any combination of the two. The Jews in New Testament times had numerous sects (same word as “heresies”), two of which were the Pharisees and Sadducees. Enemies of the church referred to it as a “sect” (Acts 24:5). Paul the apostle did not agree that the church is a sect, but acknowledged that he served God “according to the way which they call a sect” (Acts 24:14). Like dissensions, heresies are the natural result of contention and selfish ambition. Jesus prayed for unity based on truth, not divisions based on false teachings and egotism.

Envy is a feeling of discontent at someone else’s good fortune. Whereas jealousy refuses to share what it has, envy resents those who have something good. Jesus’ enemies hated him because they envied His popularity with the common people (Mark 15:10). Rather than envying those who have good fortune, we ought to rejoice with them (Romans 12:15); that is especially true for members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Paul concludes this list of the works of the flesh with three more sins of the fleshly appetites, though not necessarily directly connected to sexual immorality as in the previous lesson. The first of these is murders, which is practically self-explanatory. Murder is the natural result of a number of other works of the flesh. For example, Cain murdered his brother Abel because of envy and hatred (see 1 John 3:11-15 & Genesis 4:3-8).

Next is drunkenness, which is also practically self-explanatory. Much time, paper, and ink have been expended trying to split hair to determine the precise point at which one becomes “drunk.” One who is walking according to the Spirit has no interest in even approaching a state of drunkenness. Long before speech becomes slurred or one begins to stagger, beverage alcohol’s very first effect is to dull the inhibitions (the sense of right and wrong). Countless people have committed sinful acts under the influence of alcohol that they would not have dreamed of doing while alcohol-free. You will never be drunk if you never take the first drink!

Third are revelries – wild parties, the boisterous and irresponsible actions of people who are intoxicated or who are behaving as though they were. In the two other places where this word is used in the New Testament, it is associated with drunkenness and sexually immoral behavior (see Romans 13:13 and 1 Peter 4:3). These behaviors were typical of paganism; they were less common among the Jews, but not entirely unknown.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Paul concludes with the expression “and the like.” He could have mentioned many more specific sins of the same type, but these are sufficient to put his point across.

What consequences come from practicing the works of the flesh? Paul had told them before and was telling them again: “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). That is to say, they will not go to Heaven, but will be eternally lost. Paul wrote similar words to the Corinthians: “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Note that he did not say “such are some of you,” but “such were some of you.” Those who have committed these sins certainly can be forgiven; but they must not continue to practice them!

Do you want to be on the winning side on Judgment Day? (Hint: The good guys win!) As long as you are alive in the flesh, there will be that tug-of-war within you (flesh v. spirit). You cast the deciding vote as to which one wins. Vote for the spirit, against the flesh!