

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 38 (September 14-20, 2014)

In this week's devotions, we will study from Paul's letter to the Galatians as we continue to learn how to live by the Spirit of God.

Sunday, September 14 (read Galatians 5:13-15)

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)

We have been set free from the rules and regulations of the Old Testament law with its impossible demands (see Romans 10:4). That does not give us a license to sin, however. On the contrary, the power of the Spirit living inside gives us the ability to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God. In our natural sinful states, we are capable of thinking about only our own needs and desires, but the Spirit blesses us with the ability to “serve one another in love” (v. 13). Jesus lists “Love your neighbor as yourselves” (v. 14) as the second most important commandment (see Matthew 22:36-40). Those who violate this command are in danger of being destroyed, even as they attempt to destroy others by their words (v. 15).

Monday, September 15 (read Galatians 5:16-18)

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Galatians 5:16)

The verse printed above should make all of us flinch, because none of us has reached the point where we never sin or have sinful thoughts. As we will see in the next couple of devotions, there is a big difference between sinning, as we all do, and living a **lifestyle** of known sin, something no Spirit-filled Christian should do. We spent most of week 37 studying the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. Paul mentions the same thought in this text to remind the Galatians (and us) that we will have a lifelong battle between the Spirit of God and our own sinful desires (v. 17). He also reminds us that, “if you (we) are led by the Spirit, you (we) are no longer under law” (v. 18). Read the September 13 devotion again to see what a privilege this is!

Tuesday, September 16 (read Galatians 5:19-21)

*I warn you, as I did before, that those who **live like this** will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:21b, emphasis mine)*

Not many people can honestly read this list of sins without acknowledging their guilt in several (or most) of those areas (v. 19-21). That should make us thank God for His **mercy** and His **grace**. This passage is **not** saying that a true Christian will never commit any of these sins, but it **is** saying that a real believer will not be comfortable living a **lifestyle of sin** because of the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit within him/her. In this passage, sexual immorality (fornication) includes premarital, extra-marital and homosexual sex as well as pornography and the thought life (lusts; see Matthew 5:28), so none of us can ignore God's warning. The Lord knows we are weak in our sinful natures so He has provided an alternative plan. We will see that option in tomorrow's devotion.

Wednesday, September 17 (read Galatians 5:22-26)

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

Take note of the singular verb “is” in v. 22. You would think that the nine different “fruits” on the Spirit’s vine would necessitate a plural verb. The reason for this singular verb is that all of the nine qualities are available as a single package to every person who has God’s Spirit living inside. Did you identify the fruits on His vine that you have not adequately harvested? Many of you would answer “**patience**.” Our printed verse tells us that we have “crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” If you know anything about crucifixion, you know it is a slow, painful death. Don’t be discouraged if you still have a long way to go before you can say that your sinful nature is dead (v. 25). Be **patient** with yourself and with others. Just continue to “keep in step with the Spirit,” and don’t “become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (v. 26).

Thursday, September 18 (reread Galatians 5:22-26)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

If you have not already done so, I want you to memorize the printed verse today. Those who live according to the Spirit have no need to worry about any of the “Thou shalt nots,” because we are no longer under the law (see Romans 10:4). The law of love works better anyway! My wife and I do not have a list of rules for each other on the refrigerator because our love dominates the relationship. Neither of us would ever **intentionally** do anything to hurt the other. If this is true in a human love relationship, how much more should it be true in our fellowship with the Lord? Begin today to eliminate the “intentional sins” on your list of shortcomings. You will find that the nine “fruits” from God’s vine will joyfully replace the old sins and habits.

Friday, September 19 (read Galatians 6:1-5)

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Those who have advanced in **living in the Spirit** will still notice the sinful activities of **other** believers. Paul commands us to be **gentle** with them, remembering that we once struggled with the same sins. Because sins of the flesh are so appealing to our old sin nature, be very careful or some temptation will return that you thought you had completely conquered (v. 1). You cannot “fulfill the law of Christ” and ignore the struggles of your brothers and sisters. As you assist them in their burdens, do not come across as though you have none of your own (v. 3). God is not pleased when we compare ourselves to others, whether we think we are superior or inferior (v. 4-5). Also, personal responsibility is always important to God (v. 5). The Lord works best on my behalf **after** I have exhausted my human limitations.

Saturday, September 20 (read Galatians 6:6-10)

Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7)

As I am writing today’s devotion, I just returned home from picking up fresh corn, tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers and squash from the garden of one of my neighbors. While I was out, I stopped by a church member’s house to pick a pan of blueberries. It is quite apparent that my people are fulfilling the command of verse 6! I want you to memorize today’s printed verse, because it will answer a lot of your future questions. Many have said, “Since Jesus has paid the **penalty** for my sins, why should I be concerned about being filled with the Spirit so that I can live a holy life? Verse 8 answers that question for you. A **lifestyle** of sin is not an option for a believer (see Monday’s devotion). Never get tired of sowing spiritual seeds (v. 9-10).