

HIS SIDE VERSUS OUR SIDE - OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

Or, What is a TRUE Christian?

by Norman Harrison

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CHAPTER 13

SPIRIT VERSUS FLESH - GALATIANS 5:16

We have this antithesis summed up in two comprehensive words: flesh and Spirit. On Our Side it is flesh; on His Side it is Spirit.

"I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." -- Galatians 5:16.

These are the two antithetical elements of life, the two opposing resources upon which life must depend. If we are living "our" life, it's flesh; if we are living "His" life, it is Spirit.

These are the basic terms of our identification with the human family and with the divine family. **"In Adam"** we all inherit the flesh; **"In Christ"** we all inherit, by covenant right, the Spirit. The Flesh has its way of living and expressing itself. The Spirit has His way of expressing Himself. The two are "contrary." Now our antithesis becomes a sharply drawn antagonism.

The Christian's Problem Plainly Stated

These words, of course, are addressed to Christian people, those who have undertaken to live the Christian life, for only believers have the HOLY SPIRIT; but such also have the flesh -- persistently so. It is explained that **"these are contrary the one to the other."** Their aims and purposes are diametrically opposed. Each says "No" to the other. Each checkmates the other's moves. The result is a stalemate for the Christian -- "ye cannot do the things that ye would" -- until the problem finds a solution.

Evidently, in one sense, the Christian has a harder time than other folks. If I am an unsaved man and want to do a thing, I go ahead and do it. If I am a saved man, I may want to do it and the Spirit may say, "No, you not to do it." What a miserable way to live! Is there no solution?

The situation reminds us of the country preacher's exposition of the doctrine of election: "The Lord is votin' for you, and the devil is votin' agin' you. Whichever way you vote, that's the election."

So our way out is, "**Walk in the Spirit.**" Give the Spirit a free hand, the full right of way. Let your life be the practical day by day expression of His life.

GOD's Estimate of the Flesh

"Flesh" is the Bible's word for human nature. Leaving off the "h" and spelling it backwards, we have "self." Flesh is the self-life. It is what man is, left to himself. At times self behaves very commendably; again, it behaves very selfishly. When not well in hand it shows itself off. The front page of our newspaper reveals that human nature is out of hand much of the time.

Man tries to educate it, to train it, to discipline it; he passes laws to compel it to behave. But GOD? -- GOD unsparingly condemns it. He says it is incurably bad. The flesh has a mind of its own and that mind is "**not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be**" (Romans 8:7). GOD makes clear that He has no confidence in the flesh. Therefore His children are described as those who "**have no confidence in the flesh**" (Philippians 3:3), but rather join Him in self-condemnation, saying, "**I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing**" (Romans 7:18).

It is a great step forward for a Christian, especially one reared in the church, who has never been, as we say, "deep in sin," when he humbly and whole-heartedly accepts GOD's estimate of his inheritance "**in Adam,**" thus to be thrown in complete dependence upon the Spirit, his inheritance "**in Christ.**" His great gain is that, being now "**led of the Spirit**" and under His control, he has no need of being "**under the law**" (5:18). The HOLY SPIRIT has come into his life to take the self-life in hand and keep it under control.

The Potentialities of the Flesh

The variety of ways in which the self-life expresses itself, or may find expression for itself, is now given a full listing, in a catalogue that is not at all complimentary to human nature -- read Galatians 5:19-21. It is a startling list; we are ashamed of it before we read it. It begins with the baser sins of sex and passion, but it takes full account of the more refined sins that "get by" in polite society.

A more comprehensive arraignment of fallen human nature is found in Romans 1:26-32. Another is in II Timothy 3:1-7. These should be read and pondered. They are a valuable part of the "**all scripture**" that is inspired of GOD and "**is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**" (II Timothy 3:16). Dear Christian reader, if you would understand yourself and the workings of your nature that so often have baffled you and even alarmed you, study your Bible; know what it has to say about you, apart from the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul did not invent these charges; he is but following our Lord who had this searching word for the men of His day:

"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil

things come from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

In these four listings the children of Adam are charged with sex sins, social sins and spiritual sins. Not that any one person would be guilty of all of these; they are the potentialities of human nature, the evil channels through which it may find expression. I have never been a drunkard; but I have a nature capable of drinking. I have never murdered; but I share with the race a nature that is capable of murder. I do not get angry; but if my nature were disciplined, I would. Thank GOD, we of America did not commit the atrocities laid at the door of the Germans and Japanese during World War II, but humbly we should acknowledge that we have a nature that apart from the restraint of Christian ideals is capable of such deeds; for GOD **"hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth"** (Acts 17:26). We are left no room for boastfulness, but much reason for thankfulness.

"BUT"

What GOD can put into one word! But! It stands here (5:22), between flesh and the Spirit, as the focal point of our prolonged Galatian antithesis. If we have ever doubted that the teaching of this Epistle is essentially and sharply antithetical, this crucial "but" dispels such doubts.

It is this antithesis that largely characterises Scripture; there is no middle ground. Read the first Psalm; its three "but's" carry the whole teaching. There are many "but's" of salvation, notably, John 1:11-13; Romans 6:23; Philippians 3:7; 1 Peter 1:18,19; Romans 3:21 (the turning point from condemnation to justification); so likewise Ephesians 2:4.

Here we are facing the "but" of sanctification. Christian living is an equally sharp transition from the old to the new, from trying to make the flesh behave to allowing the Spirit His full freedom to work. Again we face Paul's crucial question: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Dear reader, have you a clear-cut "but" between your former and your present way of living? Not to have spells defeat.

Fruit" of the Spirit versus "Works" of the Flesh

Vital to our problems is the distinction unfolded in the two words, "fruit" (singular) as against "works" (plural). The flesh provokes a wide-range gamut of works; the Spirit produces a blended whole of Christian character.

The flesh has its variety of expression, destructively working this and that, with no necessary connection between them. A man may be a thief, but not a murderer; a liar, but not a drunkard. He may experience anger, but not envy; passion, but not pride.

When I was a lad I joined a temperance society. The evils of intemperance were represented by a box with supposed snakes on the inside, while holes on all four sides were labeled with the havoc wrought by strong drink. One was poverty; another, dishonesty; another, suicide. One never knew out which hole the snake would put its head. Just so are the outcroppings of the flesh.

Some of these works are in disrepute among us, such as adultery, drunkenness, murder, and the

like. Others are quite respectable. One may be quarrelsome, given to fits of anger, of a jealous disposition, and retain the full esteem of his fellows. Yet, let us note it well, they are all in the same class. They are all equally in disrepute with GOD. They all remind Him of man's fall away from Him; they are the outbursts of life "**in Adam**." So He solemnly forewarns us, tells us before we go on indulging in them "**that they which do such things**" -- not just a few of the worst -- "**shall not inherit the kingdom of God**" (Galatians 5:21)

The Spirit's Fruitage

Is there no remedy? Yes, indeed. GOD has provided a way out. "**Walk in the Spirit**." Stay, "abide," every moment on His Side, and these things of Our Side will never have a chance. Abide "**in Christ**" and you will be overjoyed at the "**much fruit**" resulting (John 15:1-5). The fruit of the Spirit, reproducing CHRIST in us, is Christ-flavored fruit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22,23).

What are these qualities? Not the nice exhibition of Christian character, nor yet the casual result of the HOLY SPIRIT living in us. They are the dead-in-earnest product of the Spirit's setting about to checkmate the works of the flesh. This is His way of doing it. This is the Spirit lusting against the flesh so that we do not fulfill its lusts. These traits are His answer, His "but," to the cravings of the flesh. They are His means of keeping us "on side."

Suppose we are lacking in these qualities. It is not merely a lack of Christian character; we are sinning against the Spirit; we are defeating His declared purpose in coming to live in us. Suppose we still have the workings of the flesh. It is not merely that these things are wrong and we ought to get rid of them. Far from that. We are grieving the Spirit; we are blocking His New Covenant program; we will not let Him carry out the purpose for which He came to live in us. Practically we are "off side," where we have no business to be.

"Love, Joy, Peace"

One of the most illuminating words of Jesus concerning the work of the Spirit is this: "**He shall glorify Me**" (John 16:14). He will magnify CHRIST in human living. Whatever CHRIST desires a follower of Him to be the Spirit will set about to make him. He will produce Christ-flavored fruit. He aims at Christ-likeness in the child of GOD.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love

"It is bound to be. "**God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him**" (1 John 4:16). Was Jesus concerned about our loving one another? "**A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another**" (John 13:34). But what makes it "new"? "**As I have loved you, that ye also love one another**." That is, His love is setting a new standard for loving that outmodes all others. Love, not those who love you, but those who hate and despise you. Do you say, "I can't do that?" A good confession. "Very well," says the Spirit, "I will supply the love; I will love that way in you."

I go into church where they seem free to "**bite and devour one another.**" One would think this command of Jesus was not in their Bible. How can they? Only because they are living back on the human side, dependent upon human affection that fails, cut off from the supply of divine love that never fails.

A man confesses to cherishing ill-will in his heart. He says, "That fellow wronged me, and I hate him." There are many such wrongs; life is pretty much that way. Let us analyze the matter. Who does the hating? Would you say, the HOLY SPIRIT? Would you dare lay it to Him? No. Then it is "I," myself, the self-life. Put the blame where it belongs. "I" have failed. Why? Because I was not abiding in Him; I got back on Our Side where alone such feelings can be cherished.

Gladly, thankfully, I yield myself to the HOLY SPIRIT to work His love in me, that the lustings, the tendencies of the flesh, under whatever provocation -- anger, ill-will, envy, quarrelsomeness -- may not be fulfilled in me.

"The fruit of the Spirit is joy."

And you do not have joy? What are you doing? Simply refusing the HOLY SPIRIT His freedom to do what He came into your life to do. That is extremely serious; far more than a mere defect in Christian character. Read your Bible concerning joy. CHRIST expects it: "**These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full**" (John 15:11). GOD commands it: "**Rejoice evermore**" (I Thessalonians 5:16) -- at all times, under all circumstances. "**The joy of the Lord**" -- His joy, ministered by the Spirit -- "**is your strength**" (Nehemiah 8:10). Then the lack of it is our "weakness."

"But," some one says, "I am so difficulty circumstanced; I am discouraged -- I can't help it." Very well. Ask yourself, who is discouraged? Is it the HOLY SPIRIT? Is He having such a hard time that He has grown discouraged? Never. You are discouraged. You are consulting your feelings, your fears, your circumstances, and in your failure to "abide," the HOLY SPIRIT can't have His way and produce His fruit.

Have we considered the paradox of Christian living: naturally, we have sorrow; supernaturally, we have joy. Where was Jesus when He bequeathed to us His joy? Under the shadow of the cross, with the sorrows of the world's sin about to engulf Him, "**a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,**" His face "**so marred more than any man**"; yet He says, "**My joy.**" The HOLY SPIRIT faithful to Him under trial, kept ministering strength to Him, even His joy. The Apostle Paul experienced this paradox and demonstrated joy under great trials. Read his recital of them in II Corinthians 6:4-10. He says of his experience, "**As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing**" -- Paul practiced the joy he preached -- then he adds, to enlarge upon the paradox, "**as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things**" (vs. 10).

Friend, read your Bible for its joy. I recently went through the Psalms, marking every note of joy and gladness. What a rebuke to sadness! Paul from the Roman prison writes the Philippians a prolonged appeal to rejoice. "**Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice**" (4:4). But the Greek is, "I will say, Rejoice." Circumstances may be against it, but since the Lord expects it, "I will say, Rejoice," in the strengthening of the Spirit. A sad, long-faced Christian only advertises himself and the fact that he is failing; there, "I will rejoice."

"The fruit of the Spirit is peace."

And you do not have peace? What are you doing? Frustrating the express purpose of the Spirit in coming to live in you. Jesus left us His peace, saying, "**Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you**" (John 14:27). It is a proven peace, persisting under greatest trials: "**These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulations: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world**" (John 16:33). Unquestionably CHRIST expects us to have peace and display it; but, knowing human failure, the Spirit says, "I will make it My business momentarily to produce peace."

"But," some one says, "I am so situated, my trials are such I cannot help worrying. If we must worry, let's do it scripturally! But no one has come forward with a single verse. If you could find one you would only prove that the Bible contradicts itself, for repeatedly it forbids it: "Don't worry"; "**Let not your heart be troubled**"; "**Be careful for nothing**"; "**Fret not thyself**." And the HOLY SPIRIT in us is our constant enabling for carrying out these injunctions.

Read your Bible for its peace. Take Philippians 4:6, 7 to heart, and practice it. Peace is the twin sister of joy; one cannot live without the other. Peace is the badge of a Spirit-indwelt believer. "**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body**" (Colossians 3:15). Literally, let the peace of CHRIST for which, for the experiencing and displaying of which, you were called to be members of His one body, rule, arbitrate, settle all questions in your hearts; that is, act as the umpire between the promptings of the flesh and the divine purposes of the Spirit.

Christian, you were called to peace, the opposite of worry; called to perpetuate CHRIST's peace on earth; called to display His peace as evidence of your allegiance to Him. You had no right to join the Church of CHRIST and go on worrying, thereby practicing a denial of Him. His peace is the badge of your being on His Side. You can worry only by falling away from the grace that constantly ministers peace.

"Longsuffering, Kindness, Goodness"

"The fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering."

And you are lacking in it? You are quick-tempered and easily provoked? What are you doing? You are successfully checkmating the Spirit's aim to develop Christ-likeness in you. Consider your Lord, "**Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not**" (1 Peter 2:23). Hear your Lord proclaiming Himself: "**The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth**" (Exodus 34:6). The HOLY SPIRIT has taken up residence in you to make you like Him, like Himself.

"But," some one says, "I get so impatient," or "I had such an exasperating experience and lost my patience." Lost my patience! Friend, the best of us have very little patience. But who gets impatient? You wouldn't accuse the HOLY SPIRIT of ever being impatient. No, it's you. A friend was telling me of his trials with a house trailer, and said, "I got so impatient." I looked at him and said, "You! who make such a profession of CHRIST."

There is just one remedy -- only one. Confessing that you, left to yourself, will always fail. Don't try to be patient; then you might be, but only at times. Live on His Side, availing yourself of His strengthening. Listen! "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power" -- one might think he was being equipped for some great undertaking, but no -- "**unto all patience and longsuffering**" -- and that isn't all -- "**with joyfulness**" (Colossians 1:11). A double fruitage of the Spirit is ours: His patience, and His joy along with whatever suffering we are called to endure.

"The fruit of the Spirit is kindness"

Why is there so much unkindness, even among Christian people? There is but one explanation. We brush aside the Spirit to be free to indulge the self-life. We get back on Our Side where the flesh holds sway. "**Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind**" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Kindness follows with longsufferings. In our care to "**grieve not the Holy Spirit**" we put away the harsh things, such as bitterness, anger, and malice, and make room for kindness: "**and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted**" (Ephesians 4:30-32).

If indeed we have not fallen away from grace, the fact that we are in fellowship with Him will evidence itself in a Spirit-bred spirit of kindness, shown even in our speech: "**In her tongue is the law of kindness**" (Proverbs 31:26). Spirit of GOD, make us kind.

"The fruit of the Spirit is goodness"

Where shall we go for goodness? Not to ourselves: "**In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing**" (Romans 7:18). Even Jesus refused to be called good if regarded as a mere man: "**Why callest thou Me good? none is good, save one, that is God**" (Luke 18:19). Therefore it is said of man, "**There is none that doeth good, no, not one**" (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:12).

How gracious of GOD to find a way to fit Himself into our lives that through a vital process of appropriation His goodness may become ours. This is the work of the Spirit, and this is the blessed result of walking in the Spirit.

"Faith, Meekness, Temperance"

"The fruit of the Spirit is faith."

Whence comes faithfulness? It is an attribute of GOD. GOD is faithful. "**Great is Thy faithfulness**" (Lamentations 3:23). Under the New Covenant this Faithful One has found a way of living in us to make His faithfulness a characteristic of His children.

A man says, "I am so undependable; I disappoint myself and my friends." A worthy confession for us all! We can all distrust ourselves. But the HOLY SPIRIT makes a man wholly dependable, in observing engagements with promptness, in keeping promises, in meeting obligations, so that, staying on His Side where He can work, we display His faithfulness in us, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

This threefold grouping relates the fruit of the Spirit, generally speaking, to life's threefold responsibility: to one's self, to one's neighbor, to one's GOD, thus -- Inward Graces (selfward) -- love, joy, peace. Outward Graces (neighborward) -- longsuffering, kindness, goodness, and Upward Graces (Godward) -- faith, meekness, self-control."

"The fruit of the Spirit is meekness."

Meekness is the spirit of humility. Of Himself our Lord says, **"I am meek and lowly in heart"** (Matthew 11:29). Paul beseeches the proud Corinthians **"by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"** (II Corinthians 10:1). Our Lord's earthly life was one long refusal of pride and self-seeking, climaxing in the voluntary self-abasement of the upper room and the cross. GOD seeks humility in His children; it is the cornerstone of Christian character. **"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"** (James 4:6).

Man is naturally proud. Pride is in his nature. Turning to James 4:5 we find the Spirit **"lusteth"** against the proud in His desire to make man humble. Left to himself, to self-effort on Our Side of the cross, the self-effort will continually crop out in native pride. When we live on His side the Spirit graciously takes all this native tendency in hand and produces a humble meekness that displaces pride.

"The fruit of the Spirit is temperance."

Whence comes self-control? Surely, we think, this is something I must do for myself. But, no; this, too, is the Spirit's business. "I" would fail, so He has taken over even this. The Greek word has a prefix, "en", in. It means to be controlled by an inward strength, an inward mastery. It is an in-control, in the realm of the spirit, where the Spirit does His work. Instead of imposing restraining habits upon the self-life, it invades the very citadel of the self-life. It deals with self's desires.

One confesses sadly, "I don't know why I act this way; I just lost control of myself." Fine confession! You are on the wrong side of the cross. Get over onto His Side and the Spirit will operate on your self-life that causes this lack of control; He will take you in hand. Spirit-controlled, you will be genuinely, inwardly self-controlled.

Not in the Realm of Law

"Against such there is no law" (vs. 23). What law would you suggest as needful to regulate any one of these qualities? There is none needed. The HOLY SPIRIT has lifted us out of the realm of law and become Himself the law, the ruling principle of life. He has put Himself in control. For the letter of law kills and cramps, but the spirit of freedom in CHRIST gives life -- and keeps on giving.

What is more, this work of the Spirit is based upon the perfect work of the cross in slaying the old self-life: **"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"** (vs. 24). What a portrait of a Christian! In His crucifixion for me CHRIST included my flesh-life -- not merely the sins but the sin principle. This is true of every believer. **"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with"** CHRIST (Romans 6:6). Insert the word "jointly" to

get the full force of the Greek. Our old self-life was on the cross with CHRIST, jointly dealt with in His death to sin. To His cross He took my temper, my passions, my tendency to evil. Thus CHRIST accomplished a victory for me over every moving, every prompting of my flesh-life.

This is simply wonderful. But if I say on Our Side of the cross the flesh still lives and appeals. Failing to enter into His victory I must do the best the "I" can. But life on His Side of the cross is totally different. Here the Spirit is constantly checking out for me the values of this accomplished victory of self-crucifixion. I'm not doing it; He is doing it. My responsibility, since I "**live in the Spirit**," is to "**also walk in the Spirit**" (vs. 25). If I give expression to Him momentarily He will momentarily see to it that I do not "**fulfill the lust of the flesh**." CHRIST's victory for me is now the Spirit's victory in me.

SPIRIT VERSUS FLESH - GALATIANS 5:16

THE EVIDENCE OF SALVATION

Salvation is a three-tense experience: in the past, from the penalty of sin; in the future, from the very presence of sin; for the present it is salvation from the power of sin. I am presently saved by the activity of the Spirit from the activities of the flesh. But -- am I? Do I have the evidence?

To aid us in determining this let us do a bit of visualization of what happens on either side of the cross:

OUR SIDE - The Flesh Side

Immorality
Murder
Drunkenness
Anger
Envy
Strife

HIS SIDE - The Spirit Side

Love
Joy
Peace
Goodness
Faith
Temperance

This is merely a representative listing of the activities of the flesh: the first three -- we utterly condemn these; the second three -- these we mildly condone.

One says, "I am so thankful I am saved from immorality and drunkenness." Why, my friend, your flesh never expressed itself in these channels; the HOLY SPIRIT had not need to busy Himself saving you from them. But your flesh did sow itself in fits of anger, or a bit of jealousy,

or a strain of quarrelsomeness that made you "hard to get along with." It is from these the Spirit seeks to save you.

To illustrate: Here is a man given to drink; in his unsaved state his flesh craves it. Tired of it all he enters a mission, accepts CHRIST, and is saved. He says he is. Two weeks later you see him and he is in a drunken state. Is he saved? "Oh, no," you say, "he wouldn't go on drinking if he were saved."

Before you were saved your flesh indulged in a show of anger or perchance, jealousy. And now -- how many years is it? -- Your flesh allows the same indulgence. Are you saved? Where is the evidence?

You fully expect the Spirit to take from the drunkard the very desire for drink; he is no longer a slave to it, but is freed from its power. Why does He not do the same for you? Why do you consider yourself saved when you remain under the power of your former flesh-habits?

Dear friend, discouraged with your self-life, come over to His Side of the cross, to the grace side, where there is abundant grace to cope with all our sin, where the Spirit delights to take our case in hand and set us free, where we are presently and evidently saved.

Once when teaching Galatians in a city of the South, using a blackboard for illustration, the pastor's wife brought their three-year-old boy every morning. Somehow he took in the teaching, His Side versus Our Side of the Cross. Some days after the meetings had closed little Stevie was behaving badly. His mother reproved him, saying, "Stevie, what is wrong with you this morning, that you are acting so badly?" Stevie reflected for a moment, then he said, "Well, I got on the wrong side of the cross."

Friend, that's it! That explains every failure, a failing to "abide" in CHRIST and draw upon His resources. Confess it as frankly -- "On the wrong side of the cross."

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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