

“The Works Of The Flesh ...”

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revelings and such like, even as I forewarned you, as I did forewarn you, that they that practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

“The works of the flesh.” The 15 enumerated ills are not all the product of bodily, flesh desires. They are, however, all the product of the natural man, whether body desires or desires of the mind. The Calvinist defines “flesh” here as “corrupt and unrenewed human nature” (Albert Barnes, Commentary on 1 Corinthians-Galatians, p 335). Their conception is that man is totally depraved, wholly inclined to evil. I rather understand Paul’s reference to the flesh here to be identical to his “*mind of the flesh*” which he wrote about in Romans 7. In that chapter he recorded that those with the “*mind of the flesh*” brings death, is enmity against God, is not nor can be subject to the law of God, that those with the mind of the flesh cannot please God (vss. 6-8). Those with the mind of the flesh are those of whom Paul further wrote in Ephesians 2:3. Of Jews he said “... *we also once lived doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest ...*” The same natural desires which exist in man is seen in beasts, the practice of which is sin for men but not sin for the animal. These are sin for man because man has a soul and to preserve it he cannot follow his own personal desires and will. The animal is under no sexual restraint, he manifests jealousy, wrath, separation; none of which are crimes to him. Such are simply the results of his self interest. He thinks of self. And in man, pleasing self produces every single vice cited by Paul in the words of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21).

“And the works of the flesh are manifest.” None need ask, “*Have I ever seen such?*”, for examples of these are manifest on a daily basis. TV soap operas glorify fornication, adultery and intrigue. Scenes of people at beaches and swimming pools with not enough clothes on the “wad of a shot gun” (as some used to say) are examples of uncleanness and lasciviousness. The glorifying of wealth and possessions demonstrate idolatry; the “getting high” on illegal drugs or the “methamphetamine labs” so prominent in East Texas are prime examples of sorcery, a word which our word “pharmacy” (drugs) come from. The car behind you in which the driver sets down on his horn because he sees the light turn green half a second before you; or perhaps you have sat at a cross street for a long while awaiting a break in the long line of traffic and suddenly there it is -- enough room for you to pull into the outside lane. But the approaching car is in the same lane, driving at

a "break neck" speed and he will not move over, as he could, into the inside lane. Rather he races up behind you, slams on his brakes, swerves wildly into the inside lane and passes you, shaking his fist in fury or perhaps gesturing with an indecent sign: are examples of wrath. Need more be said? The works of the flesh are manifest!

We see them, but one sobering question, do we practice them? Is the apostles' warning lost on us? "Of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they that practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). Next: "The Fruit Of The Spirit."

Jim McDonald