

Who sits on the throne of your life?



The Parish of Peasedown St John

Galatians 5:16-26 — The fruits of the Spirit

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Galatians 5:16-26

[16] So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

[17] For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

[19] The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; [20] idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions [21] and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[23] gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. [24] Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

[25] Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Who sits on the throne of your life, Paul asks the Galatian Christians and by inference us today?
- Paul outlines in this passage three opposing forces that are at work in all of our lives which are competing to sit on the throne of our life. These three forces are:
 - i) Self
 - ii) Rules
 - iii) Spirit
- You can tell which of these three forces are in control, says Paul, by looking at the 'fruit' of peoples lives. How would you describe your life? What is the 'fruit' that others see?
- Paul encourages the Galatian Christians and by inference us today to 'live by the Spirit' (Galatians 5:16) and to allow the fruits of the spirit to blossom in our lives. He warns us to beware of 'Self' or 'Rules' which can easily take control of our lives: 'For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.' (Galatians 5:15-7)

2.2 Self

- Before we became Christians our 'sinful nature' ruled the roost. We did things our way. 'Self' was in control and sitting on the throne of our lives. But when we became Christians we agreed to do things God's way, we effectively put God on the throne of lives.
- All Christians, says Paul, are continually tempted to follow the desires of their former sinful nature or the flesh. If we do not learn to control 'the flesh.' or our sinful natures then we become Carnal Christians. There were plenty of Carnal Christians in Paul's day, as there are today. Carnal Christians have allowed 'Self' to creep back on the the throne of their lives.
- The fruit of allowing 'Self' back onto the throne of our lives is obvious, says Paul: 'The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and

debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.' (Galatians 5:19-21)

2.3 Rules

- The recipients of this letter would predominantly have been Jewish converts to Christianity. The problem was that many of these Jewish believers had not fully grasped what Jesus had done for them on the Cross. They still believed that fulfilment of the law was their salvation. A set of rules was sitting on the thrones of their lives.
- This set of rules included receiving circumcision, observing all the dietary laws such as refraining from eating pork and other unclean food, observing all the ceremonial laws such as keeping the Sabbath, offering sacrifices and observing all the feasts, etc. It also included the observance of the ten commandments and all the moral and legal laws.
- Paul had discovered personally what it was like to have a set of rules on the throne of his life. He knew how impossible it was to fulfil the law in his own strength: *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."* (Romans 7:18)
- Paul wrote this letter to the Jewish converts in Galatia to encourage them to replace 'Rules' with the 'Spirit:' *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.* (Galatians 5:18) To put Jesus on the throne of their lives and to be free from the bondage of the law.
- Unfortunately many Christians then and many today still continue to live under the law. They still think that they can earn their way to heaven. The fruit of their lives is a constant realisation that they need to do more.

2.4 Spirit

- Having outlined the dangers of allowing 'Self' and 'Rules' to rule the roost in our lives Paul encourages the Galatians and us to live by the power of the Holy Spirit: *'live by the Spirit'* (Galatians 5:16)
- To live by the power of the Holy Spirit means that we need to allow the power of Holy Spirit to drive our lives. A car gets its power from petrol. The first thing a driver does before going on a long journey is to fill up the car with petrol. In the same way if we want to have a lot of power to live the Christian life, we need to be filled with God's Spirit.
- Many Christians wrongly think that you have to be super holy to be filled with God's Spirit. In this country it is easy for a car owner to fill their car with petrol, because petrol is plentiful. In the same way it is easy for a Christian to be filled with God's Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is plentiful. So how do we go about being filled with Holy Spirit. How do we tap into God's power and allow the fruits of the Holy Spirit to develop in our lives: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-3) He are seven tips:
 - i) We need to spend time with God: Jesus said: *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."* (John 15:4) We need to spend time with God everyday in prayer, praise and in meditation of Scripture.

- ii) We need to study the word of God: The Word of God is the bread of life. In digesting His Word, we will know God's eternal truth and experience the filling of God's Spirit.
- iii) We need to dedicate our lives to live for God. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."* If Christ gave His life to die for us, the logical response to His love is to live for Him.
- iv) We need to remove sin from our daily lives. We all still have impure thoughts and have hatred, jealousy and covetousness in our hearts. We all still lie and deceive each other. We all still have the tendency to quarrel and fight with our family members and co-workers. We all need to confess these sins every time we find ourselves falling into them. We need to confess our sins everyday and depend on the power of Holy Spirit to control our flesh. The Holy Spirit is more powerful than the sinful desires of our flesh. He can help us to fully control them.
- v) We need to stop loving the world: *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15) Let us obey this command so that the love of God can constantly remain in us. When God's love remains in us, we will experience the life and power of the Holy Spirit.
- vi) We need to meet together with other Christians to pray, praise and worship our heavenly Father: *'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another'* (Hebrews 10:25)
- vii) We need to deny 'self'. All of us, myself included, have problems of self-indulgence, selfish ambition, selfishness, self-righteousness and self will. These are the deeper sins hidden in our lives. As long as we allow these sins to remain inside of us, they will hinder God's Spirit from moving freely in our lives.

2.6 Conclusion

- So who does sit on the throne of your life? Is it 'Self,' 'Rules' or the 'Spirit'?
- If 'Self' is sitting on the throne, then our lives are probably full of: *'sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.'* (Galatians 5:19-21)
- If 'Rules' are sitting on the throne, then our lives are probably focussed on observing God's laws.
- If the 'Spirit' is sitting on the throne, then our lives will be flowing with *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-3)

3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 What is a carnal Christian? How would you spot one? Do you know any?
- 3.2 What had many of the Galatian Christians not fully grasped?
- 3.3 What practical things can we do to *'live by the Spirit'* (Galatians 5:16)?
- 3.4 How would you describe your church, is it ruled by 'Self,' 'Rules' or the 'Spirit'?