

## Galatians 5:19-21

Gal 5:19 (NKJV) **Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,<sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,<sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

As we continue the study of this passage, what we did in our last study was to identify eight (8) observations that we are addressing. The first observation was that there is nothing good that can be found in the “**works of the flesh**” – not one thing of any redeeming value. The **first principle** is that **sin has nothing to offer us but misery**. However, one of the very important questions that we are trying to answer as we migrate through this passage is how to know if we are actually walking in the Spirit, and truly living under the control, power, and influence of the Holy Spirit. Living under His influence is always the goal, always the target, and always that for which we should be actually striving. What Paul is doing here is giving us very well-defined standards so that we can personally determine if we are engaged in the “works of the flesh” or whether we are being “**led by the Spirit**” and therefore are able to “**live in the Spirit**” and manifest the “**fruit of the Spirit**”. This really is not something for a Christian to take lightly because these two lists provided in this passage reveal whether or not we actually even understand what it means to be a Christian and live out the Christian life accordingly. If the “works of the flesh” are constantly being manifested in a believer’s life, then it should be more than evident that they do not understand the Christian life or how it is to be lived. To me, what we are addressing is at the very heart of what it even means to be a Christian. I cannot take these lists lightly.

One of the most obvious and apparent ways that we can know whether or not we are walking in the Spirit is when and if the deeds of the flesh are being manifested in our lives. If a believer will honestly and sincerely read down this list of the “**works of the flesh**”, they can know whether or not they are truly living out the Christian life in a way that pleases God if these characteristics are not in their life. If any one of the characteristics listed in v19-21 are somehow being manifested in our life, at that moment we can know with certainty that we are **not** walking in the Spirit. We know exactly what area of our life that the Holy Spirit will be targeting to work on in our life.

Now, the next principle that should be discerned from this passage is what Paul says in v19 – which was our second observation. The second observation we made was that the “**works of the flesh are evident**”. Stated another way, they are self-authenticating. The kinds of sins that are listed are obvious, apparent, observable, and quite discernible. So, here is the **second principle** that we want to take away from this phrase: **We cannot hide sin and we cannot hide from its consequences**. For instance, [Numbers 32:23](#) says,

Nu 32:23 (NKJV) **But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.**

The HCSB says “**be sure your sin will catch up with you**”. I like that translation because it captures the essence of what this verse in Numbers is saying. It is saying that sooner or later a believer’s sin will just catch up with them and manifest itself in their life. It may not be tomorrow, it may not be next week or even this year, but eventually it will catch us with us and manifest itself in some way. Unfortunately,

one of the ways that it too often shows up is in the lives of our children. We must appreciate that much of our behavior is learned, so when we see errant behavior in our children, it is generally a behavior that has been manifested by someone else and learned by our children. I just cringe inside with all of the violent video games that kids play today. That is a learned behavior, and the more violence they both see and entertain, the more violent they will become themselves. If a father is always angry and lacks self-control, then much too often that same behavior manifests itself in the lives of his children. If one marriage partner is disrespectful of the other marriage partner, chances are very good that the children will lack respect for authority. We certainly see this characteristic in most all of the public schools. The kids are just reflecting what they have seen in the home – dysfunctional parents. David is a prime example of this principle in the Old Testament. He was a man after God's own heart because he never went after other gods, but he was really one of the worst father's seen in the Old Testament. He had no meaningful testimony to His children and they were nothing more than a bunch of rebels who lacked personal self-control. Just think how out of control Solomon was with his life – 700 wives and 300 concubines, and working everyone to death to satisfy his own personal lusts for things. For someone who had been great wisdom, it does not seem that he was ever able to exercise any of it. His son Rehoboam was influenced by his godless friends after Solomon died and it resulted in the splitting of the nation into two.

None of these sinful attributes listed in [Galatians 5:19-21](#) – not one of them - can be hidden and concealed from view. They may not initially manifest themselves in someone's life, but the longer they linger in a person's life, the more evident and the more visible they will become. Whenever someone is committing one of these sinful characteristics in their life, everyone knows, or maybe I should say, will eventually know. There is nothing veiled or hidden about what Paul calls "**the works of the flesh**". This is very important to the discussion because what this idea of these works being self-evident does is that it clearly places the responsibility for these kinds of sinful propensities in a person's life on the individual in whom these negative works are found. Everyone can see how we live. Our life is an open book and is open to everyone with whom we come into contact. Our family can see how we live, our friends can see how we live, our church family can see how we live, our co-workers can see how we live, and even pure strangers can see how we live. So, these "**works of the flesh**" are by their very nature not something that can be hidden, not something that can be swept under the rug, and not something that can simply be concealed from view. It is impossible to walk in darkness, to live in sin, and to engage in the works of the flesh, and it not become both known and visible to other people.

The problem that we all have is that we speak what is in our heart. What is in our heart always finds its way to our tongue. [Luke 6:45](#) says it this way,

**Lk 6:45 (NKJV) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

Listen to [Mark 7:20-23](#),

**Mk 7:20 (NKJV) And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, <sup>22</sup> thefts,**

**covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.** <sup>23</sup> **All these evil things come from within and defile a man."**

If these kinds of attributes are being manifested in our life, then we simply cannot blame it on the devil or the world or the culture or somebody else. Scripture does not give us that option. The blame lies squarely with us, squarely within us. Jesus actually uses the phrase “**from within**” twice in those four (4) verses so that we would not miss His point. This list is so similar to the one in [Galatians 5](#) that there is virtually no difference.

Here is the **third principle** that we want to discern. **The more sin that we commit in our life, the more difficult it becomes to control it, and eventually it will become very visible and noticeable to others.** What we consistently hear people say is what is generally abiding in their heart, and so if they are saying negative things and doing negative things, it is simply because they are not living under the control of the Holy Spirit. This is an inescapable reality. If I can say it this way, and it may be a little crude, but **sin simply cannot keep its mouth shut.** The other day I heard someone speak to one of their young children who was annoying them. They simply said two words – “Shut up!” I thought to myself when I heard that person talking that way that it was not the young child who was out of control, but the parent. The frustration and irritation that was in the parent’s heart simply came out of their mouth. Listen very carefully. **If you can control your tongue, you can control everything else in your life.** If you are someone who truly wants to grow spiritually, then get control of your tongue. Listen to what [James 3:2 and 6](#) say about this issue.

**Jas 3:2 (NKJV) For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.**

**Jas 3:6 (NKJV) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.**

When we become frustrated, exasperated, aggravated, annoyed, and/or irritated with people and our circumstances, it only reveals how shallow our Christian life may actually be. The way I have taught some of this in the past is that **our frustration and irritations are simply a reflection that we do not possess a quality that God wants us to have.** So, everytime that we may begin to get frustrated or irritated with someone or something, I can almost guarantee that the expression of that frustration is just a short step away and will eventually become some meaningless babbling out of our mouth. It is simply the same principle Jesus expounded that “**out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**”.

Generally, we all act in accordance to our personal sinful propensities. We indulge in what we enjoy. People do what they want to do, live how they want to live. The reason that so many Christians do not support their churches is simply because they do not want to go to church. They have developed other priorities. Everyone does what they want to do, not what they need to do. This is true for everyone, and everyone sees. If someone is greedy, they will manifest that greed in some way. They will be stingy, insensitive, uncaring. If someone is always discontent, they will constantly be expressing that frustration and irritation in what they say about people. If someone has a contentious personality, they will always be arguing and disputing. Everything becomes a debate. It is as if they simply cannot contain and control that uncontrolled propensity and proclivity for contention in their life. They just have to speak their mind about everything that they do not like or with which they do not agree. I have met many people

who actually enjoy being contentious. They would argue with you, confront you, and debate you on any issue. Those kinds of people are the ones who destroy churches, who ruin good fellowships. Those kinds of people are just revealing how proud they are. These personal, sinful propensities cannot be hidden. Why is that? Well, it is simply because of what Paul reveals here relative to the nature of a person's sinful tendencies and inclinations. He says these things are “**evident**”.

The Greek word for “**evident**” is “*phaneros*” and it simply means “manifest, apparent, obvious”, and it comes from the Greek word “*phaino*” which means “shining, open to sight, visible.”<sup>1</sup> The underlying meaning of the word is really very simple. It means that what is being done has become visible and obvious to others, that it is something that is clearly public for people to see.<sup>2</sup> It is a word that stresses what is clearly visible to the physical sight so that anyone can see what is happening.<sup>3</sup> There is no foolery or trickery here. So, when we read this listing of the “**works of the flesh**”, none of these negative attributes are things that a person can just simply hide or conceal in their life. When these sinful attributes are in our life, they will eventually become visible and discernable to other people who are around us. Sin is always observable, always unmistakable in its character. For instance, if you are prone to anger, your tendency to anger will become manifest to everyone else. You will say ugly things to them and about them. If you are a contentious person, that attribute will become manifest to everyone else and you will argue and debate and quarrel about anything and everything. You will be the person that always has to have the last word, always has to make the last point, always has to assert their ideas above everyone else. If you are a selfish person, that will be something that everyone eventually discerns. If you are someone who is always discontent and unsatisfied with everyone and everything, that characteristic cannot be hidden. There is no mystery here – none whatsoever. You and I cannot hide the sin that may be dominating and controlling our life. Eventually, and generally sooner than later, it all becomes “**evident**”, open to view, and manifest to everyone that we know.

So, here are the three principles that we want to take away from this word “**evident**” and Paul's underlying discussion of it.

Principle One: **Sin has nothing to offer us but misery.**

Principle Two: **We cannot hide sin and we cannot hide from its consequences.**

Principle Three: **The more we sin, the more difficult it becomes to control.**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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<sup>1</sup> Strong,

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 1435.

<sup>3</sup> Precept, *Galatians 5:19*, *phaneros*, ep.