

Lesson Ten: Galatians 5:16-26

Living by the Spirit

At the end of our last lesson, Paul concluded by pointing out that the whole of God's law is fulfilled in one law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." While it may seem odd that Paul does not also mention love for God, St. Augustine notes, "But who can love his neighbor, that is, all men, as himself, if he does not love God, since it is only by God's precept and gift that one can love one's neighbor?" Love of neighbor is the key message of today's lesson as it is the foundation of life by the Spirit.

For now, let's skip Q#1-2. We'll come back to them at the end.

A conflict (5:16-18)

Before we read this section, I would like to comment on the use of the word "flesh." When we hear that word in relation to sin, I think we tend to think about sins that we commit with the body—sloth, sexual sins, gluttony, etc. While that is certainly a part of what Paul describes here, it is not all that he means. Once again, St. Augustine can help us better understand what Paul is trying to say. St. Augustine describes someone who lives according to the flesh as someone who lives for himself—"For everything which stems from a disordered love of oneself is called work of the flesh." The notation for 5:19 in the ICSB describes it in a similar fashion—as "a disordered love of the world."

With those comments in mind, let's read 5:16-18. Discuss your responses to Q#3-5.

Acts of the sinful nature (5:19-21)

Read 5:19-21. We've encountered these lists of sins in Paul's letters before. Like the authors of our LifeChange book, I would encourage you to look up the definitions of these words—even the ones you're fairly certain you already know. You might have some misconceptions about their meaning, or you may, at the very least, gain some new insight into their fuller meaning. Having done so, what were some of the words you listed in Q#6?

What was your response to Q#7? We don't necessarily have to share this with one another, but you might want to spend some time thinking about which of these sins you tend to most frequently tolerate in yourself as well.

What is Paul's warning to those of us who commit these sins? Then what possible hope can we have of ever inheriting the Kingdom of God? See Q#8.

Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23)

Better keep out the dictionary. These words are so familiar, but do we really know what they mean, especially in the Christian sense? Read 5:22-23. (Notice how Paul describes these as the "fruit" of the Spirit and not the "fruits." The editors of the ICSB suggest that it means "that life in the Spirit is integrated and whole, not fragmented or divided"—in other words, the more we follow the lead of the Spirit, the more we become one with the Spirit. Or as Paul wrote back in 2:20, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me".)

Discuss your responses to Q#9-11.

The truth is, most of the time when we sin, we aren't seeking to do evil. Most often we sin by seeking out good in a disordered way. For instance, love can become disordered when it is tainted by jealousy. Goodness can become disordered when it is tainted by self-righteousness. Compare the list of sins with the list of virtues and you can see that the fruit of the Spirit is Love—love for God and love for one another. These virtues are the presence of rightly ordered

good—"...no longer I". For most of us, they will take a lifetime of living by the Spirit to cultivate and develop. At times, it may even seem impossible and hopeless—we keep making the same mistakes—but these are the very faults that should keep us close to Christ. Our weaknesses remind us how much we need the salvation only he can bring.

"Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God," "sanctified . . . [and] called to be saints," Christians have become the temple of the *Holy Spirit*. This "Spirit of the Son" teaches them to pray to the Father and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the *Holy Spirit* renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation. He enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true."

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1695

Conflict resolved (5:24-26)

Read 5:24-26. Discuss your responses to Q#12. What were your responses to Q#15-16? Now let's go back to Q#1-2.

During this season of Lent, it might be a good idea for all of us to use these lists for an examination of conscience in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We can give thanks for the grace that has brought us this far, repent and seek forgiveness for where we've failed, and ask for the grace to continue to grow in virtue.

USCC for Adults Chapter 8: The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ (CCC 571-664)

1. This chapter begins with the biography of Sr. Thea Bowman. Sr. Thea championed the importance of education in the call to become one Church. While I would agree, I think that we face a much more urgent call—one that honors life. In the US, the leading cause of death among African Americans is abortion. In fact, abortion kills more black Americans than the seven leading causes of death combined. Sixty percent of black Americans are killed in their mother's womb. Why do you think this is tolerated? Do you think this country's abortion policy is based on racism?
2. How does Christ's call to "deny self", to be the grain that "falls to the ground and dies" to produce much fruit, and "to lay down one's life" apply to today's lesson?
3. How is the Resurrection both a historical event and an event that transcends history? Why is it important that we recognize both of these aspects?

3/24/2011

Our next meeting will be on April 7 when we will discuss:

Lesson 11: Keeping on Track LifeChange

Chapter 9: Receive the Holy Spirit USCC for Adults (CCC 683-747)