

SPECIAL STUDY

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

5:19

“Adultery” is found only in the King James Version, since it is missing in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts. The sin itself is prohibited by the more general word “fornication.”

“Fornication” (*porneia* – por NY ah) includes all forms of unlawful sexual activities, from adultery to homosexuality to prostitution. In New Testament times, sexual standards among the Greeks and Romans were quite low. The Roman author Seneca noted that “Chastity is simply proof of ugliness,” and that “innocence is not rare, it is non-existent.” Gibbons has recorded that “of the first fifteen Emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct.” Among the Greeks, especially the philosophers, homosexuality was “the great national disease.”

“Uncleanness” (*akatharsia* – ah kah thar SEE ah) means general filth or defilement of one’s moral being. It points to a dirty mind, dirty actions, a dirty life.

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, used this word of the ugly accumulation around a festering sore or wound. The Greek Old Testament used the word in connection with the defilement that makes a man or woman unfit to come before the presence of God. In the New Testament it refers to a foul indecency of mind, a spirit soiled and stained by the world.

“Lasciviousness” (*aselgeia* – ah SEL guy ah) is the strongest and most inclusive term for moral indecency. Also translated licentiousness or indecency, it names a reckless abandonment of what is decent and right.

Josephus (*Antiquities*, XX, 5, 3) tells of a Roman soldier standing guard at a Temple ceremony in Jerusalem about 45 or 46 A.D. As if his very presence were not defiling enough, he publicly dropped his clothes and relieved himself, outraging public decency and recklessly defiling the sacred grounds.

When a person is so corrupt that he neither cares about public respect, nor fears divine wrath, he has *aselgeia*.

5:20

“Idolatry” (*eidololatria* – eye doh loh lah TREE ah) is literally “the worship of what can be seen.” William Barclay says that to the ancients, the idol had two

functions: To localize and to visualize the god it represented. While some superstitious reverence was attached to the stone or wooden image, the people recognized that it was only a representation of an unseen force. What they wanted was to tap the power of that god for their own benefit. In order to gain good crops and fertile herds, one should worship the idol which represented the goddess of fertility.

Their worship, then, was actually a selfish greed to gain things for themselves. In this sense, Col. 3:5 says idolatry and covetousness are the same sin. The Lord our God despises the sin of idolatry for two reasons:

1. It is a rejection of the true God – Rom. 1:23
2. It is a worship prompted by greed – Col. 3:5

“Sorcery” (*pharmakeia* – far mah KY ah) began as the use of drugs, whether good or bad. Our modern pharmacy traces back to this word in its better sense. The word was always used in its evil sense in the Greek Old Testament, being closely associated with witchcraft (cf. Ex. 7:11 and 22; Isa. 47:9 and 12). Sorcery is an attempt to gain mastery over another person’s life by occult means, especially the uses of incantations and drugs.

“Enmity” (*echthrai* – EK thry) is the exact opposite of *agape* love. In another form (*echthros*), this same word is the common term for “enemy.” It refers to an attitude of automatic hostility, such as Jews felt toward all non-Jews, and Greeks felt toward non-Greeks. While love ignores the faults and reaches out, enmity ignores the virtues and shrinks back.

“Strife” (*eris* – AIR iss) is the outward result of inner hostility or enmity. It involves quarreling, squabbling, and general conflict. This word was very aptly used to describe the situation of the church at Corinth (I Cor. 1:11 and 3:3).

In Greek mythology, Eris was the goddess of discord and strife. Enraged because she was the only deity not invited to a certain marriage feast, she threw into the midst of the guests a golden apple inscribed “to the fairest.” The resulting jealousy and self-seeking of the gods was the initial cause of the famous Trojan war.

“Jealousy” (*zelos* – ZAY loss) was a word with both a good and a bad sense. In the good sense it was “zeal,” a passionate desire or devotion to a noble end. However, this fervor is easily perverted into selfish desire. A competitive spirit may produce excellence, but it may also produce jealousy toward the success of someone else. Then the competitor no longer wants to

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achieve his own glories, but wants to take those achieved by another.

“Wraths” (*thumoi* – thoo MOY) once meant such noble virtues as courage and spirit. By the time of the New Testament, however, the meaning had focused on the passionate side of man’s spirit. Here it refers to anger and wrath in a sudden outburst of bad temper. The fact that this wrath explodes quickly and then may be over in no way makes it a virtue.

The person who has vomited up all his rage on everyone around him will usually feel better for “getting it out of his system.” But how do those feel upon whom he has spewed his wrath?

Neither is the solution to try to bottle up the anger. In this case, the pent-up rage will eat like an acid. The only solution is to let Jesus drink that bitter cup for us. He alone can convert our bitter wrath into better love.

“Factions” (*eritheiai* – er i THIGH eye) would be better understood as selfish ambition. The word originally meant to work for pay. It soon came to mean the willingness to do practically anything, solely for what one could get out of it for himself. Aristotle used the word in reference to politicians who sought power and prestige, rather than true service. The KJV also uses the translation “factions,” which points to the element of party pride, in addition to personal pride.

“Divisions” (*dichostasiai* – di koh stah SEE eye) means literally “to stand apart.” This is the opposite of the Christian ideals of peace (*eirene*) and fellowship (*koinonia*). Division is directly contrary to God’s plan and purpose for mankind. In fact, the final plan for the end of the ages calls for the reconciliation of all things in Heaven and on earth (Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10). When all things are put right with God, they will necessarily be put right with one another.

Today the church of Christ is racked with divisions, which cannot be justified. When God’s children divide from one another, they are exercising the will of their former nature, which we know as the flesh.

“Parties” (*haireseis* – HY reh siss) comes from the verb meaning “I choose.” When someone chooses a viewpoint different from what is accepted as true, he is called a “heretic” and his belief is “heresy.” However, in the New Testament, the primary meaning has to do with choosing up sides and forming a distinctive sect.

Forming an exclusive party around a pet doctrine is sinful even if that doctrine is true!

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“Envyings” (*phthonoi* – FTHOH noy) is always used in a bad sense. It means a genuine feeling of malice toward another, even stronger than sin of jealousy. The jealous man wants the gain that another man got; the envious man just wants to see the other man deprived.

The old “dog in the manger” fable well describes this feeling of malice. The dog does not want and cannot use the hay in that manger, but it is determined to keep away those who could use it. When a man is unhappy so long as his neighbor is happy, he is guilty of malice.

Jealousy says, “I want what you have.”

Malice says, “I just don’t want you to have.”

“Murder” (*phonoï* – FOH noy) is found only in the KJV, since it is lacking in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts. Note the similarity in Greek between murder (*phonoï*) and envying (*phthonoi*). Both murder and adultery were probably added in the margin of an early manuscript by a scribe who wanted the list to include more specific acts of sin, in addition to the general sins of mind and attitude.

“Drunkenness” (*methai* – METH eye) appears as a plural word in the Greek, apparently referring to repeated instances of becoming intoxicated. Although wine was a universal drink throughout the Mediterranean world, drunkenness was widely recognized as wrong. Jews, Greeks, Romans—all diluted their natural wine with water to avoid intoxication. If someone actually wanted to get drunk, he would deliberately leave out part or all of the water.

“Revellings” (*komoï* – KO moi) are orgies. They are shameful celebrations of the perversion of man’s natural appetites for food and drink, and for sexual fulfillment.

In II Maccabees is related the attempt of the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes to bring an end to Judaism. He made it punishable by death to observe the Sabbath or possess a copy of the Torah. He made a burnt offering of swine on the sacred altar. Then he made the Temple a house of prostitution. In II Macc. 6:4 it says that the Temple was filled with riots and “revellings.”

In summary of these works of the flesh, consider this possible grouping:

Fornication)	
Uncleanness	}	Sex Abuses
Lasciviousness)	

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Idolatry	\	Seeking Supernatural
Sorcery	/	Power
Enmity)	
Strife		
Jealousies		
Wrath	}	SELF-ishness
Factions		(The sin of the Big I)
Divisions		
Parties		
Envy)	
Drunkenness	\	
Revellings	/	Sensuality

Note that over half the sins can be grouped into the “Big I” category. These all point to egotistical pride and hostile selfishness. These all destroy the unity which God designed and desires for mankind. One sure sign that a man is not right with God is that he is at odds with his fellow man.

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“Love” (*agape* – ah GAH pay) is the first and greatest of all Christian virtues. Over 100 times this noble word appears in the New Testament, giving us the description of God and the essence of the commandments. It comes as quite a shock, then, to find this word totally absent in early secular Greek literature. While the verb form for this kind of love was used occasionally, the very first use of *agape* we have found was in the Scriptures of the old covenant.

The Greeks actually had four separate concepts of love. They may be briefly described as follows:

- Eros* (EH roce) – Passionate sexual love
- Storge* (stor GAY) – Family love and devotion
- Philia* (fih LEE ah) – Friendship and affection
- Agape* (ah GAH pay) – (Used only as a verb)
To show concern for

The main school of philosophy in New Testament times was the Stoics. They taught that it is dangerous to love. Epictetus said a man should teach himself not to care if he lost a pottery cup, or a dog, or even a piece of land. Eventually he could lose his health, his children, his wife—and not care! This would be the totally unshakable happiness that men sought.

Aristotle taught that love is diluted when widely shared. One must draw a tight circle about himself and a chosen few to know real love.

Jesus totally reversed these concepts. He demonstrated that real love is willing to risk everything, and that real love cannot be restricted. The highest kind of love draws the most inclusive circle.

An interesting contrast can be drawn between the three major concepts of love. Whether ancient or modern, these forms of love can be found:

Eros says, “I love you *if* you make me happy.”

Philia says, “I love you *because* you are so lovable.”

Agape says, “I love you *in spite of* your doing nothing for me, even if you are very unlovely.”

Thus a very neglected and colorless Greek word became the vehicle for the grandest concept of all. The kind of love depicted in the New Testament has these characteristics:

- * *Agape* loves even when love is not deserved (Rom. 5:8).
- * *Agape* loves without restrictions. It reaches out to meet the need wherever a need arises.
- * *Agape* loves by choice and by will, not just by feeling and emotion. It is the only kind of love that can be commanded.
- * *Agape* loves without counting the cost, and without calculating the profit.

“Joy” (*chara* – kah RA) is at the heart of the Gospel message. In the beginning, the angels at Bethlehem heralded the “good news of great joy.” At the end, the risen Lord appeared to his disciples, who “disbelieved for joy.” The Gospel is such joyful good news that it really is hard to believe!

Joy is a happiness that is spontaneous, radiant, and most of all, clean. The shrill, jaded laughter of the world cannot compare with the exuberant joy of the Spirit. Real joy is not prompted by happy circumstances, but triumphs over any circumstances. Always rejoice! (Cf. I Thess. 5:16, Phil. 4:4)

“Peace” (*eirene* – eye RAY nay) comes into the New Testament with a rich background. The Greek word refers to an absence of alienation, a state of reconciliation and oneness. The philosophers were constantly seeking peace, but always saw it in a negative light. For them peace meant removing pain, eliminating desire, and killing emotion. The resulting vacuum did not, however, produce peace.

It is the Hebrew use of the word, though, that gives it a distinct and productive sense. The Hebrew word for

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peace, *shalom*, is much more than the absence of conflict. It is the presence of all that is needed for man's highest good. For instance, when Joseph asked about the well-being of his father back in Palestine, he actually said, "Is it *shalom* with him?" (Gen. 43:27).

Peace is an inner sense of well-being. While joy is the mountaintop of happiness, peace is the plateau of contentment. Even if the Christian comes down at times from the highest peaks, he need not go into the valley of despair, for he can stay on the plateau of peace.

"Longsuffering" (*makrothumia* – mah kro thoo ME ah) means literally "long-tempered." It refers to the quality of patience which does not quickly flare up and explode. The Apocalypse of Baruch says, "wrath is restrained by long-suffering, as if by a rein."

Two different words are often translated "patience" in the New Testament. Our word here means especially patience to put up with people. The other word, *hypomone* (hoo poh moh NAY), means endurance to outlast unpleasant circumstances (Rom. 5:3).

Our perfect example of longsuffering is God, Himself. In the days of Noah, God restrained His wrath while the ark was being prepared (I Pet. 3:20). In these present days, God is again restraining the wrath and punishment which the world deserves. The only reason He has not already destroyed this world is that He is "longsuffering, not willing that any should perish" (II Pet. 3:9).

"Kindness" (*chrestotes* – kray STOT ace) comes from a word meaning "virtuous, excellent, and gracious." It is an inner beauty of spirit which blooms into sweet and loving Christian character. This kindness, however, is not only a sweet disposition—it is an active benevolence. It is not just the gentle voice briefly stopping by the bedside, it is the tender hand that stays to feed, to wash, to heal.

"Goodness" (*agathosune* – ah gah tho SOO nay) means moral uprightness. It is concerned with measuring up to the standards of right and wrong. The distinction between "kindness" and "goodness" can be found in Christian writers all the way back to Jerome (4th century). Goodness is Jesus cleansing the Temple and rebuking the Pharisees; kindness is Jesus reaching out to the woman at the well and to the little children.

Just think, though, how rarely these virtues are combined! One man is morally and doctrinally straight, but is harsh and cold in his faith. Another man is full of understanding and kindness, but finds no deviation from morality or truth ever serious enough to be rebuked. We

should find in Jesus our perfect example of the perfect blend—a generous goodness and a wholesome kindness.

"Faithfulness" (*pistis* – PISS tiss) was a common word among the ancients. One papyrus fragment describes a slave as "faithful and not given to running away." A good synonym for the word would be loyalty, or trustworthiness.

The KJV has simply "faith," which to many people means merely the exercise of the mind in believing a certain fact. However, the word "faith" itself must include the element of loyalty. This can be seen even in English. To be "faithful" equals to be "full of faith" and yet are admittedly not "faithful"! What they are full of is not faith (loyal commitment based on trust and belief), but simply ideas about whether God probably exists or not.

"Meekness" (*prautes* – prah OOH tace) is one of the least understood words in the Bible. Meekness is not weakness or lack of courage—in fact, it is just the opposite. Meekness is great strength or strong spirit held under control.

Two uses of *prautes* in classical Greek illuminate its meaning. Xenophon said that horses which had been wild, but were then trained to obey the reins, were "meek." Aristotle said that "meekness" was the golden mean between excessive anger and excessive apathy or spinelessness.

In the Bible only two men are called meek. In the Old Testament, it is Moses who is "very meek, more than all men who are upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Yet this same Moses had marched in before the most powerful man on earth and demanded, "Thus says the Lord, let my people go!" The man who led perhaps two million slaves to freedom was no weakling, no coward.

In the New Testament, it is Jesus himself who is called meek (Matt. 11:29, 21:5). Yet Jesus was strong in every way. One need only see him cleansing the temple, confronting the Pharisees, or "setting his face toward Jerusalem," to know his strength.

In many ways, meekness is like our "yield right-of-way" signs. Even when we have superior force and could bully our way through, we often yield our rights to our fellow man. He who is meek has yielded his reins to God and his rights to the well-being of others. He is gentle, teachable, and submissive.

"Self-control" (*enkrateia* – en krah TY ah) is the last of the fruit of the Spirit. The word "temperance"

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used in the KJV gives the erroneous idea that this is merely to abstain from alcohol.

The root of this word means “to hold, to grip, to have power over.” In this form it means mastery over the body’s appetites, especially in the area of sex. The human body has appetites which are totally ignorant of right and wrong. One’s stomach may crave food, regardless of whose food it is, what his diet may require, or whether the time is appropriate. The stomach is simply hungry; the reasoning mind must control. When a man is able to deny wrong desires and satisfy right desires, he has self-control.

The Christian ought not to expect desires to go away; he ought simply to gain mastery over them through the Spirit.

Fruit of The Spirit – Christians Are Different

In faith, he is a believer.
In heart, he is obedient.
In character, he is a saint.
In relation, he is a son.
In conflict, he is a soldier.
In the world, he is a pilgrim.
In a vine, he is a branch.
In life, he is a servant.
In his walk, he is a living epistle.
In expectation, he is an heir.
At all times, out and out for Christ.

Fruit of The Spirit – Christians Behave Differently

Obedience instead of disobedience
Hope instead of hopelessness
Giving instead of getting
Purity instead of profanity
Forgiveness instead of vengeance
Trust rather than terror
Tithing rather than tipping
Faith rather than fear
Prayer instead of passion
Kindness instead of cruelty
Love rather than hate
Nurtures rather than neglects
Witnessing rather than wasting
Kneeling rather than knocking
Undergirding instead of undermining