

# KEENER THOUGHTS

August, 2011

## SHORT BIBLE PHRASES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE # 9 IN SERIES

### THE FLESH LUSTETH AGAINST THE SPIRIT AND SPIRIT AGAINST THE FLESH

**T**his I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. **For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:** and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Gal. 5:16-18)

Here is an exhortation followed by a wonderful promise. If we do not understand one, we will face disappointment and discouragement concerning the other. Walking in the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, which if we are Christ's, lives within each of us, is not like taking an afternoon stroll, or a time of meditation during Sunday school class, or Sunday worship service. The word walk, here, (Greek = peripateo) means to walk continually, or to pursue our lifestyle after the leadership of the Spirit. The context of this passage interprets the exhortation for us, and guides us to the promise. Verse 13 reminds us that we are called unto liberty from the yoke of bondage, but warns us not to use that liberty as an occasion to follow the desires of the fallen flesh. Verse 14 tells us that every detail of the law is fulfilled in this short message, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Then, verse 15 warns us that if we bite and devour each other, as the lusts of the flesh tempt us, we will both destroy and be destroyed. Then verse 16 promises that if we live according to the leadership of Spirit of God, that dwells within those who are Christ's, we will not live in fulfillment of that natural lust which is within us.



Now, lest you fall into discouragement, notice this passage does not promise that we will never commit any sins of the flesh, that interpretation would contradict volumes of Scripture. What it does say is that we will not **fulfill** those fleshly lusts, that is, we will not be able to allow them to dominate our lives, and dictate our behavior. Those sins will be **the failures** of our lives, not **the rule** of them. Now, how is it that we are in this contradiction of desire, and that we live in this frequent failure and frustration? It is because ***the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh***: I remind you that we are not "In the flesh," in the same sense as is one who has not the Holy Spirit. However, our fleshly nature is not eradicated, as some wrongly imply, but it is still there, lusting against the Spirit of God which certainly dwells in us, if we are in Christ. The flesh and the Spirit, contrary each to the other, mutually lust against each other, so that we cannot do the things we would, or that we will to do. Does that mean we cannot do the good we will to do, or that we cannot do the evil we will to do? It applies to each of these as certainly as to the other. Paul explains this to us in Rom. 7:14-18 *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (**that is, in my flesh,**) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

Paul says he is carnal, sold under sin. That is to say as far as the flesh is concerned he is sold, by his father Adam, to be the slave of sin, and, in every natural way, he feels contradictory to the law, which is spiritual. That "*natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" (1Co. 2:14) But, there is at the same time, an inward man, and Paul delights in God's law *after the inward man*, (Rom. 7: 22.) Thus we understand that there are two personalities in Paul, those two personalities each lusting against the other. There is the carnal man sold under sin, and since Paul is born of the spirit, there is an inward man, who delights in the law of God. Paul is thus, in himself, not free to will and to do according to the holy law. Paul wills to do good, but how to perform it, he finds not. It is just not in him, because in his flesh dwells no good thing. He therefore does that which he would not, or those things which he wishes not to do. At the same time, he is not abandoned to be the helpless servant of sin, because the Spirit of Christ dwells in him. Because of the flesh, he cannot walk in full compliance to God's holy law, but because of Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, he cannot yield himself to be the persistent servant of sin. In both directions He cannot do what he wills to do. So it is with each of us who dwells in this body of death, and yet knows the Lord. The grace of God teaches us, "*that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*" (Tit. 2:12)

Now, Natural man's reasoning is why would God, who is loving and all wise, place man in the position of subjection to a holy law which he cannot fulfill, and yet hold him responsible under pain of death, to obey it? However, natural man's question is fatally flawed. God created man in His own image, innocent of sin, and positively holy. Man was, by virtue of being God's creation and property, responsible to do God's will. God's will was, and is, perfect, just, holy, and eternal. Since God is immutable, His will is immutable. That is to say it does not, indeed, it cannot change. In the moral aspect of His holy law,

which He gave through Moses, he revealed a portion of that eternal will, in as far as it pleased him that is the portion that revealed the responsibility of human action.

Long before that law was revealed to Moses, Adam, by rebellion and transgression, fell from his holy state, leaving himself and all his posterity morally incapable of pleasing God, and thus, concerning eternal decree, dead in trespasses and sin, That is to say Adam and all his offspring were sentenced to return to dust. If man is to be returned to life, or to have life restored to him, it must be through resurrection.

--FLK

(To be continued)