

Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit

Part 14

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

INTRO:

Well, we have now come to the final step in this short 3 step process of sins in Galatians chapter 5 and is also the final sin of verse 20. If you remember I grouped together these final 3 sins of selfish ambitions, dissensions, and heresies into one category, not grouped together as being similar, but more of a process, of how one leads to the next as I noted in the beginning of the selfish ambitions message.

Slide - 2 In that message we covered how selfish ambitions, is that self-seeking spirit with no regard for others, for relationships, or for any higher call including the call of God. That it is a desire to put one's interests forward, through a self-seeking spirit which does not disdain low arts, or shady actions to get ahead, demeaning themselves for gain in the process, with the inability to shift its gaze to higher things. To the higher things of God and His standard.

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From this sin of selfish ambitions, I believe it progresses to what Paul calls dissensions, which is that second standing or two states of a position. It is that standing apart in a sinful way because of the selfish desires that have originated in a person.

This division is from those who wrongfully divide the word of God, divide people, divide churches for their own selfish means, for their own selfish gains in gaining the support of others to fulfill their own 'desires and glory' and not for the Glory of God.

And I gave you some examples from the Old Testament of Miriam and Aaron as well as Korah and his company, people who were filled with some sort of selfish ambition that lead to divisions and the desire for their own glory and prestige among the people.

And then in the final part of that message I gave you an illustration that is much closer to home, one that affects almost all of us, and it was the example of how people through their selfish ambitions enter into the sin of adultery by divorce and remarriage.

Creating a second standing of opinions about the word of God and against those who would disagree with them, to separate themselves from those who would call it out as a sin.

These are people who are driven by selfish, carnal, fleshly desires to entertain and fill their own bellies with this sin of adultery.

And then from this sin of creating the division of the group or of the church in order to create that larger majority of agreement towards supporting this sin, it then progresses to the sin which Paul calls heresies.

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Because if it does not stop at selfish ambitions in step 1 or stop with the division of standing apart from the rest of the people in step 2. It almost certainly become their belief in what they are standing in as truth and becomes this step number 3 in this sin of heresy.

M. HERESIES

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Now as we look at the word Paul uses here in Galatians, it has a relatively simple definition, it is the Greek word *haireisis* *hi'-re-ses*.

It is Strong's number 139 and the Online Bible Greek Lexicon defines it as;

Slide – 6 1) *the* act of taking,

Slide – 7 2) *of* choosing, *or* choice

Slide – 8 3) *of* that which is chosen

Slide - 9 4) a body of men following their own doctrine

EOQ

And the base or root of this word comes from the word *haireomai hi-reh'-o- mi* Strong's number 138 which is defined as;

1) to take for oneself, to prefer, or choose

And it is this simple idea of taking or choosing something for one's self that is implied by this word. Now when it has nothing to do with doctrinal issues or with biblical or moral issues it is probably not something to worry about, however if it is a doctrine or a teaching or a belief contrary to the truth or contrary to the word of God it then becomes what Paul has in his mind as something being heresy.

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Vine's dictionary again says it very well in defining and explaining this word and says this;

haireisis *hi'-re-ses* denotes a choosing, a choice, and comes from haireomai *hi-reh'-o- mi* (to choose); then that which is chosen... *becomes* ...an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth and leads to division and the formation of a party.

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Such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage. Such as 2 Peter 2:1 where 'destructive heresies' signifies the *choosing that* lead to ruin.

He says that these opinions are a substitute, a replacement opinion, rather than submitting to the power of truth, implying that it is the act of choosing self-willed opinions over the choosing of truth.

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Vine's than also directs the reader to look at his definition on the word 'sect' and under that definition he says;

A choosing, it properly denotes a *preference* either for a particular truth, or for *the* perversion of one, generally with the expectation of personal advantage;

hence, a division and the formation of a party or sect in contrast to the uniting power of 'the truth', a sect is *the* division developed... *over an* ...issue.

EOQ

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It is this third step where men choose for themselves a belief as a collective, in taking an opinion together with others, an opinion in contrast to the truth which then is that final step defined as heresy, this sin of the flesh of Galatians chapter 5.

And we see this collective agreement aspect by how the word is used in the first 6 times it is used in the New Testament and all of them in the book of Acts, it simply is a reference to a group of people as the 4th definition of the Online Bible Greek Lexicon said;

a body of men following their own doctrine

An example of this is its first use in Acts 5 verse 17 where it says;

*Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect (**this is the word**) of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,*

You see another alternate translation for this word as used in other translations is the word party, or faction, as I noted the first 6 times this word is used in the New Testament it is a reference to the different parties of the Jews during the time of the apostles.

It is used to refer to the sect of the Sadducees in Acts 5:17, of the Pharisees in 15:5, the sect of the Nazarenes 24:5, and even the Christian movement by the Jewish leaders as Paul describes it in Acts 24 verse 14 where Paul speaks to Felix and says;

"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

You see the Jews viewed this new thing called Christianity as a sect, as a party, as a heresy, something that opposed the truth 'they' had in 'their' minds.

And it is Because of this view the Jews had of the Christians during the time of Christ and His apostles that the persecution of Christians began in that first century.

First by the Jews, then by the Romans, then the Roman Empire, and then the Roman Catholic Church which became the state religion of the Roman Empire as the church and state became absorbed together later. All these viewed Christianity as being heresy, and subsequently persecuted thousands upon thousands of Christians over the millennia.

And just a side note here, one thing we must remember is that secular views and historical narratives almost always want to lump Catholicism and what we would call real Christianity together and call it all Christian. That when one studies such things of history such as something like the Crusades, almost all historical accounts will retell it as a Christian movement, a Christian war, when in actual fact it was initiated by Pope Urban the second, and it was entirely a Roman Catholic movement, not a movement of true Christianity. Because as I said it is the Catholics and the Roman church that also persecuted Christians over the centuries, which secular history then just calls it Christians persecuting Christians, which is untrue. It was the Catholic Church that persecuted the Christians over the ages.

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And why do I add that note, because what comes into question is, what then defines something as heresy, what is the gage of what constitutes heresy?

Is it the one who controls the larger section of society?

Well, that has been the case with much of mans history. As we all know the golden rule ‘he who has the gold makes the rules’.

Because so many accusations of heresy in history and the persecution that resulted from those accusations were largely based on who ever had the larger party, or the most money, or the greatest influence over society as did the Roman Catholic Church in the first 1600 years of their existence. And thus, they deemed within themselves what constituted heresy, even though it was only loosely based on the word of God by distorting it for personal advantage or gain and not truly biblically based.

And so what defines whether a party is right or wrong, or whether an opinion is valid or invalid? Whether something is a heresy or not?

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Well, I think we must go back to what the Vine’s dictionary tells us in its definition. Remember Vine’s said it is ‘an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth’!

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Vine's also said, 'it properly denotes a *preference* either for a particular truth, or for *the* perversion of one, generally with the expectation of personal advantage'.

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Heresy, is an opinion which is taken by the party instead of submitting to the truth.

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It is that act of choosing a different opinion of something that is in contrast to the uniting power of 'the truth'.

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It is that sin of choosing a perversion of the truth, because such opinions are driven by the sins of selfish ambitions and dissensions with the prospect of personal gain or advantage.

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You see it is truth that has to be the standard to which all opinions are measured to.

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And if those opinions are about doctrines and theologies and teachings of God then that truth has to come from the word of God, be measured by the Word of God, agree with the word of God.

Listen carefully, for your opinions not to be heresy they must be founded on truth.

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Because if the sin of selfish ambition begins in the heart,

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And it causes division among people or in the church or in society for the support of that ambition in a sinful way

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and then moves on to create that party that holds to the doctrine or teaching of that division, and brings it to others as an opinion which is founded in an untruth...

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...you now have what Paul views as the sin of heresy and the process of these sins. Opinions and teachings of a party that are built on lies.

Because even Jesus noted this about the Pharisees saying;

These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

And then as recorded in Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7 he says;

And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

You see it was not the truth that was their foundation of their teachings. And Paul warns us of such things in Colossians chapter 2 verse 18 and 19 by saying;

*Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.*

And John gives a similar warning in 2 John verse 7 to 9;

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.

And the author of Hebrews says in the first half of verse 9 in chapter 13 saying;

Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace,

All these are warnings about false doctrines, about heresies, teachings, and interpretations that are not in line with the truth of God's word.

You see Peter tells us in 2 Peter chapter 2 that just as there were false prophets among the people of Israel in the Old Testament, there will be false teachers among us. Teachers who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, destructive parties or groups and in the beginning of verse 3 he says;

By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;

That by covetousness, by selfish desires or wantings they will exploit people in trying to get the things they want, with deceptive words, with divided tactics, and selfish ambitions they will destroy whatever they have to destroy in order to fulfill their own bellies.

Oh the wickedness of dissensions, that division for self that is so terrible, especially when they put that wickedness into doctrine as teachings from God.

And as I said last time, the worst of it is when it happens in the church. And let me tell you it is happening in churches all over the place.

Listen if you do not guard your heart, your life, your family, your church with the power and authority of God's Word as your ultimate standard for truth, you are possibly very well already on that path of a divided heresy of someone's selfish ambition already.

Some destructive heresy that will destroy your faith, your family, your church, your foundation of doctrine of the word of God. Because these destructive heresies even destroy the salvation of those who create them, just as Peter said, they;

...will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

The New Testament is filled with warnings of this thing called selfish ambitions, that carnal fleshly appetite that lives in almost all men, and there are warnings about the dissensions and divisions that arise from such selfishness.

And as I said the worst or the ugliest one of them all is when these sinful ambitions and divisions all solidify into parties and promote the teachings of heresy, which are then proclaimed in the church as coming from the word of God.

It is such wickedness when they say ‘thus says the word of God’ and have it promote some horrible sin in Christians.

Because as I illustrated to you last time, I gave you the example of the sin of divorce and remarriage in Christianity. And I mentioned to you the people who, by their own selfish ambitions and desires give in to this sin, and then make a division in others to have them stand with them in support of this sin, using misinterpreted text of the bible to support their views. In that they will sacrifice anything in order to fulfill that sinful ambition instead...

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...of submitting to the truth. They will destroy marriages, families and even their own salvation to live in that life of the flesh.

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And what makes it all the worse, is when it becomes endorsed by the pastors and teachers of the faith. When such sin as adultery is not only a chosen opinion of the person or the taking of a side in some division within the group. But when it is being taught as something as truth, something that God endorses and they use twisted scripture to do so, and make it liberally accepted in churches as a good and normal practice with no real foundation of truth whatsoever from the word of God.

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it becomes a destructive heresy, and a sin of unimaginable proportion because what they are teaching as good and allowable, is really sending people off to hell in a happy state.

A teaching of selfish division of the word of God to promote outright sin.

It is a doctrine that cannot stand the test of the truth from the Word of God. Because such doctrine is not founded on biblical principles, nor are they based on the rock of truth, but as the definition said earlier says; ‘such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage’.

Pastors and teachers all over America are teaching and preaching heresy all over this nation, and are leading people to hell in droves.

Because listen, when your doctrine is wrong, and your opinion is not brought under the power of truth, your salvation may be in question.

And listen when your salvation is in question, your eternal state is in question.

And if you are the teacher and pastor of such doctrines, where are you sending the people with your false doctrines and teachings?

Because much of today's Christianity is following wrong doctrines, wrong teachings with the endorsements of sin through heresies.

And this sin of adultery I use is only one example. This is only one of the many things that have come into the churches and are destroying them from the inside.

Not the true church, the true church will never be destroyed, but churches can become infected with sin, with heresies, and become more of a tool for the devil in deceiving more people in leading them to hell than being a glory and a light for God.

And that is what we are called to be. Listen, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 in your bibles, and no we will not be transitioning this message into a message about head coverings, but in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 2 Paul encourages the church in Corinth by saying;

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

He starts off in verse 2 with praise for keeping the things Paul has taught them in the past. However if you go down to verse 17 we see a very different intent of the letter. In verse 17 he says;

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

You see, something was wrong within the Corinthian church, there was something in their gathering that was not beneficial to the church or the believers as he notes ‘you come together not for the better but the worse’ and it is in the next verse that he explains the problem, as he says;

For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

He notes that there are divisions among them, that when they come together there are divisions within the church. From the next verse we know that these are factions, or heresies within the church, groups of men following their own doctrine, as he says in the beginning of verse 19;

For there must also be factions among you,

But now note the final part of this verse where it says;

that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

Paul is saying that there will be divisions among them, there will be differences in doctrine between the members, making it sound like a bad thing in verse 17.

But Paul then adds what these divisions are to achieve, in the first part of verse 19 he says; ‘for there must also be factions among you’, there has to be these division, these different sects, these differing opinions so that, and listen carefully, so that those who are approved, those who are true Christians, those who are on track may be recognized among them.

If they all just tolerated every doctrine that came into the church, accepted every false teaching, the whole church would be wrong and off track.

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But now that there are those who stand up to these false teachings, and do not go along with new teachings that are brought in, and this is so that others can see the true way, see the ones who are ‘approved’ as Paul says and see those who are on the right path of Christianity.

Listen, just as a side note, any time you have any movement of tolerance in the church, the potential for the whole church to go off track into sin is huge. Any time you have someone who stands up and question’s God’s word and doctrine and say we should just tolerate one another’s views, and all get along; the ship begins to sink.

And they will take all hands down with them if there are not those who will stand up for the truth, the truth of God’s Word, and be recognized as those who stand on the truth.

Listen to the commentary from J Vernon Mcgee on this passage, he says;

This helps to explain the cults and 'isms' such as we have in Southern California. Why does God permit them? Let me give you an illustration.

Have you ever noticed when a woman is cooking something and there is an accumulation on the top that she skims it off? Well, that is what God does.

To tell the truth, I think the churches are filled with unbelievers today. A large percentage of the people in the churches are not saved at all. They are just members of a church. The Lord skims them off. How does He do that? Well, they go off into the cults and the 'isms'.

That is what Paul is saying here: "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you'.

Heresy comes along in these cults or 'isms' and a lot of people go out of the churches and flock to them. The Lord is skimming them off so that those who are genuine may be revealed.

EOQ

And what I think we are finding these days is that within many churches there is more that needs to be skimmed off than what is left at the bottom. Why? Because of the rejection of the truth.

Because of the heresies that have entered the churches, many of them are off track and teach and preach and promote heresies contrary to the word of God, different opinions that are substituted instead of submitting to the power of truth.

Whenever you allow false doctrines or destructive heresies to continue in the church you will end up with a sin filled broken church, a church that is unable to deal with sin, a church that is unholy in the conduct of its members, and a church that is diseased on the inside because of the heresies that are being taught.

Peter warned them in the first century and it is still a warning that we need to hear today, because as there were false prophets among the people of Israel there will be false teachers among us, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies and many will follow their destructive ways because the way of truth is blasphemed.

And just to continue on the example I gave you earlier and in the previous message regarding divorced and remarried people, what has happened in the churches of our day is that it has not only remained as a selfish ambition of some individuals, and not only a division that has been created within the minority of a group.

But from its legalization only 55 years ago here in Canada, it has come to a work of the flesh that is taught and endorsed and preached as something that is ok with God. An outright heresy preached as truth in Christianity.

And this is only an example of one area.

Churches are filled with men following their own doctrine, their own doctrines of sin and destructive heresies.

And so where does this leave you, the individual amidst this sea of false teachings doctrines that fill our Christian world today?

Well one step would be to truly examine yourself, as you hopefully have been doing through this entire series.

And truly listen to the word of God when it tells us to be watchful. As Peter warns us in the end of his second letters saying;

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

And as Paul warned Timothy in his first letter to him in chapter 4 verse 1;

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

And then also in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 13 and 14 saying;

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

And as Paul also writes to Titus in chapter 1 verse 10 and 11;

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

Scripture after scripture gives warning after warning about being watchful of those who come up with their false doctrines, their heresies, in deceiving the simple for their own dishonest selfish gains.

The scriptures call us to be on guard with the word of God as our guide and seek out the truth of what the word says on some of these issues that have taken over other congregations.

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But even before you start, you have to ask yourself some of these important questions first, because if you do not, everything else will fail after that anyway.

And some of these thoughts come from Warren Wiersbe' book the strategy of Satan that we are going through in the Sunday school lesson;

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And the first one is to ask yourself, is the bible my ultimate authority? Is the Word of God the sole measuring rod of my life and my actions? Am I willing to take as truth everything God's Word says about everything in life? Because if you answer no to any one of these questions, you might as well just close the book now and read something else, because if the bible is not your ultimate authority, the sole measuring rod of your life and believe it to be true in every word, listen you have then already believed someone's heresy about it already.

Because God's word is the only tool, the only weapon we have in discerning and defeating the false doctrines and from Satan himself. As Ephesians chapter 6 talks about putting on the armor of God for our protection and defense it is in the final part of verse 17 where it says we are to take;

...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

It is the only offensive weapon in our hands, even when Jesus was tempted by the devil, He used scripture to counter the attack and lies of Satan. It is the only way we can defeat Satan and his lies.

By the power of Christ and the filling of the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God we can be victorious in overcoming the evils of this world creeping into churches but not only those things creeping into churches but those things that creep into our heart.

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Because the second you need to ask yourself is ‘do I then spend time reading it? Mediating on it, memorizing it? Delight in it, immersing myself in it to the point that if any temptation comes along or any difficult decision come my way or any questionable doctrine arises in my life that I ‘automatically think of going to the bible?’ ‘To go to God’s word.’

That we would be like the Bereans who searched the scriptures daily to find out whether the things Paul taught were really true.

Again if I answer no to these, then I am in danger of being taken off the path by some false enticing way of pleasure.

If I do not use the bible as my ultimate guide for the answers in life, and view it as the foundation for everything, I very well may be already on a different path with some manmade ideology of teaching some heresy.

Listen any teaching or doctrine that man comes up with has to be rooted and grounded in the true words of scripture.

You have heard me say in the past, if man has a doctrine or a teaching that he holds to, and if that doctrine or teaching does not fit all of scripture perfectly, your doctrine is wrong, because the bible is always right.

If you have a teaching and you apply it to scripture and it doesn't really want to fit, and you must twist scripture, and reinterpret the scripture to make it fit your teaching, your teaching is wrong. It is a heresy. That is why I am not a Calvinist; Calvinism has too much twisting and reinterpretation of scripture for it to be a true teaching of God's word.

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And thirdly, if I do find something in my life that conflicts with the word, some practice that doesn't line up with scripture, some lifestyle that is not endorsed by God, some belief that is contrary to the teachings of the bible, if I do find such things within my soul, then am I willing to change? Am I willing to give it up? Expose it, and get rid of it?

Because if I am not willing to allow the Word to change me, to cleanse me of the things of this world, to root out those dark things I still hold deep in my heart, then I'm still caught up with the selfish ambitions of my own life, with the dissensions of my own standings in my own way. Supporting the heresies that I will continue to support and live in because of my own selfish desires and ambitions.

And if I continue with such a mindset, I will have no desire to detect and discern the false teachers who speak of such things and become my own promoter of the heresies that I believe.

You see, this is what the devil wants, he wants you to be indifferent to the authority of the bible, he wants you to forget about the bible as it being your first go to book for advice and comfort. He wants you to be cozy and comfortable with some of the dark things you may still hold in your heart in not bringing them to the light.

Because listen, if the bible is not your ultimate authority, you go to book for every doctrine and teaching you come across, and you do not apply it to your own heart, in the cleansing and purifying your soul as 1 John 3:3 says; listen, you very well will be filled with all kinds of heresies of this world and you will become that tool of Satan, that is destroying the churches of God.

Because if you look at our churches today, what has all not come into the churches, what selfish ambitions have not entered the minds of the people, what dissensions have not risen over different interpretations of the scriptures, what heresies have not become the teachings within the church? There are things that have come in that are destroying churches, things that leave the church powerless to deal with sin, things that are taking people to hell with sins that the pastors and preachers are promoting and endorsing.

And remember this sin of heresy is not just a sin of the collective, not just the sin of a movement or decision amongst a certain group of people, it is the sin of the individual!

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Of me and of you if we allow ourselves to fall into the lies of the devil, in believing and standing with the heresies of Satan, of false doctrines, and evil teachers.

Because listen; this is something very important, we easily read of sins such as adultery and apply Paul's words of verse 21 which says;

that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But do we apply the same thinking to heresies? The 'act of taking' or 'choosing' an opinion that is contrary to the uniting power of the truth, or as a 'body of men following their own doctrine' which are rooted in selfish ambitions and dissensions. In that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You see you must look at the entirety of the verse in that choosing something that is a heresy is choosing something that leads people to hell?

There is only one final outcome of the participation of all these sins listed by Paul, starting with the A in adultery to the Z in heresies and that is all those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And so, in conclusion, we began with selfish ambitions, that putting of self above everything else, the desire to do things my way. Which then leads to dissensions, that division in standing apart from others because of my personal preference and choice. Which then leads to heresy, that party making or collection of like-minded opinions, which is not based on truth but on the perversion of one, and when these wrong or sinful opinions are in those who are in leadership or preaching positions, it spells disaster for the church.

Because not only does this become a problem within the church, but the whole church becomes the collective in supporting sin, supporting heresy, preaching heresy, promoting heresy, and as verse 21 says;

that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Read the word, study the word, and make it the foundation and standard for everything in your life including yourself!

As I said, these last three words would probably be some of the most pointed and touchy message that we will cover in this entire list. Not only looking at what you may be hiding in your heart but what you are actually believing in your soul. As Moses said to the children of Israel;

...choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Choose the truth, live by the truth no matter what it may feel like, or who is against you, and I just want to close and leave you with a quote from Oswald Chambers in which he says;

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Carelessness in spiritual matters is a crime.

Well may the Lord continue to guide us and direct us by His grace.