

Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit

Part 20

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:35-40

INTRO:

Well, we have come to Paul's final words of Galatians chapter 5 verse 21, and they are words that should be a real reality check to anyone who has been paying attention to the things we have been going over in the past few months.

Over the past several months we have been looking at the works of the flesh that Paul gives us in Galatians chapter 5 verses 19 through 21, and we have taken some very in-depth examinations of the heart as to how these things can originate within us and then also to where they can take us.

And as this message is the conclusion to his list and also to this first half of the series, one thing I hope we have learned is this, that none of these works or sins, just, 'show up' in the Christian or in our lives as if they come out of nowhere.

No, more often than not they begin as little things in our heart, little thoughts, little temptations, little exceptions or allowances to sin, and if these little seeds of sin are allowed to grow, they grow into sin and outward workings of the flesh.

And at the end of the list, at the end of verse 21 Paul gives a final warning to the reader by saying;

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.

CONCLUSION

Paul gives, no ‘maybe’s’ in the statement, no ‘exception clause’s’, no ‘what if’s’, there is just the final statement of ‘those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God’. End of story, done deal, the final conclusion to the whole matter of the things in this first half of his list and they are words that should wake up some of our churches in our day.

Now there are three aspects of these final words I want to look at as the conclusion here this morning. One is when Paul told them of these things beforehand. The second is the phrase ‘those who practice such things’ and thirdly is looking at ‘the kingdom of God’.

And starting with the first one, the first thing we must note from verse 21 is that this wasn't a list or a letter that blindsided the Galatian churches. Even though it is a harsh letter from the start, the letter should not have been a surprise to them or something totally new to them.

Even though our bibles contain only one known letter written to the Galatian churches in this area, Paul says something important in regard to the verse, he says this;

of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past,

Now the first half of this phrase could be a reference to something he has just told them beforehand in the letter.

For example, in chapter 3 verse 1 Paul says;

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

In chapter 4 in verse 8 and 9 he says;

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

And then also in chapter 5 verse 1 where he tells them to;

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

Now these last two verses of chapter 5 deal more with the context of circumcision, and the old law, but Paul says if you put your faith in these, Christ will profit you nothing. A verse that still looks at their turning back to the old ways.

And we see that much of the letter is a rebuke to the Galatians for falling back into the laws and customs of the Jewish system, or back to some other sinful pagan worship, and we can see how the phrase;

of which I tell you beforehand...

Could imply the pervious parts of the letter or make it sound like it is something he just said.

But then in the second half of the phrase Paul says;

just as I also told you in time past

This now refers to something outside of this letter, it is a reference to something Paul wrote or spoke to them even prior to this letter. Most commentaries believe that this is a reference, to his missionary journeys to the region as Gill says in his commentary and I quote;

It is when he first preached among them, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come; he then laid before them the evil nature of these things, the dreadful effects of them, and showed that there was no salvation from them, but by Christ:

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This preaching among them is evident by such scriptures as Acts chapter 16 verse 6 and chapter 18 verse 23 where these places and his journeys are mentioned. And I will show them to you here on the screen.

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This is a picture of the Mediterranean Sea and the surrounding areas, the southern tip of Italy on the far upper left and Jerusalem in the lower right.

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This would be Paul's 1st missionary journey sometime between 46-48AD. Starting in Antioch of Syria and then to the island of Cyprus and around to the other Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and then back again

Slide - 4 and then his second journey that started in Jerusalem.

Slide - 5 and then his third again starting in Antioch of Syria around and back to Jerusalem.

Slide - 6

And all these red dots, if you can see them, are the places he visited in his first 3 missionary journeys according to the bible, and the region of Galatia in New Testament times would be...

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in the center of this top right area here in what is now modern-day Turkey.

And I show you this so that we then understand that when Paul tells them in his letter saying;

...just as I also told you in time past,

We know that he was in this region, in person, at least 3 times during his ministry. And that they knew of these things he is writing about.

Now most believe that this letter to the Galatians was written between 48 and 49 AD

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and if you look at the description of his first missionary journey it is sometime between 46 and 48AD making the writing of this letter very shortly after he visited them the first time. This could explain the words of verse 6 of chapter 1 of the letter where he says;

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Turning away so soon, it may have only been a year or two at the most since he was there in person with them sharing the good news of the gospel and the way of righteousness.

And now according to the letter, they are turning away so soon, and were already tempted to go back to their old ways. And this is why he reminds them in chapter 5 verse 21 saying;

... just as I also told you in time past...

And here is why I share this. Listen, it may have been up to 2 years from the time Paul visited them to the time of receiving this letter, and in the letter, he called them foolish Galatians, fools for wanting to turn back so soon.

Listen what would Paul call some of our modern-day Christian churches, ones who can gather together every Sunday, have the word of God with them at all times, and have preachers who are employed to teach them on all of these things... and they are still going off track.

Think about it... what would Paul say to our churches today?

If Paul called them fools for turning back so soon, 2 years after he had been with them, what would he say today to our American churches that are going off track today? We have his words and letter right here and still we want to make excuses for sin!

Well there is one part of Paul's message that remains the same for all of us. Whether it is in addressing the Galatians 2000 years ago or us here today, and that is what he tells them in the next part, that after he gives his list of works of the flesh, tells them he has told them this before, and says;

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

These are the works of the flesh that Paul says are sins that if practiced will keep a person from that kingdom. And the sobering part of that statement is that we need to remind ourselves... who is Paul talking to?

Look at this, if you are in the book, what does the last part of chapter 1 verse 2 say... to the churches of Galatia!

And who is Paul talking to in chapter 1 verse 11... brethren.

And who is Paul talking to in chapter 3 verse 15... brethren.

And 4:12, and 4:31, and 5:11, and 5:13 and 6:1 and 6:18... brethren.

It is not only a letter that is directed to the churches in that region, but 8 times after the opening he calls the recipients of the letter ‘brethren’... Christians, and it is a harsh reminder to the churches and Christians that these works of the flesh are not a guideline for those who are outside of the church; it is a hard truth for those who are on the inside of the church, believers, brothers and sisters in the faith. And what is his warning and writing to these believers... that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom.

And this is the second part of the verse we want to look at, the part where he says ‘those who practice such things’.

And when looking at that phrase, one of the questions you may have heard from Christians in our day is this, ‘well how much sin can I get away with and still get to heaven?’

Well as I noted last time there are even big name people who teach that you cannot even choose to leave God, that no matter how much you sin if you are a Christian, you will still go to heaven. I guess the apostle Paul did get that memo from God when he was writing to the Galatians.

Well the New King James Version say ‘practice’, and the Greek word in the phrase is *prasso* *pras’-so* Strong's number 4238 and under the first definition it says;

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To exercise, practice, to be busy with or carry on, and can also mean to undertake as in to do.

The Strong's dictionary says it is;

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To practice, i.e. to perform repeatedly or habitually.

Even though these works of the flesh in the list can be committed and then repented of, I think the thought that Paul is implying here is the idea of a continued practice with an un-repented state of mind that brings about the condemnation of the verse.

The idea is of something lived in, or practiced by habit... and not that one can live in such things and repent of them repeatedly, no, because repentance is as we all should know by now is the Greek word *metanoeo* *met-an-o-eh’-o* which means what... a ‘change of mind’.

If you continue to live in the same sin day after day without change and you say you have repented of it... have you really had a change of mind?

Some of these things in Paul's list can be things lived in, something practiced as some habitual work of the flesh that is either harbored in the heart or lived out in the body, and some of them, such as murder if even committed one time, if unrepented of, are things that will keep us from the kingdom of God.

Now there are always those who want to toe the line sort of speaking, and will always ask something like, 'I know that living in some of these things would be a sin, but how much of some of the others can one commit or get away with and still be allowed to enter the kingdom?

To which I would always answer, 'why are you even asking', if you are asking how much hatred can I have and still go to heave, how much sorcery can I practice and still go to heaven, how much envy can I harbor in my heart and still go to heaven, how much alcohol can I have and not be a drunkard and still get to heaven...

Listen, if you already know that it is a sin, why even start or entertain the thought, if you know it is a sinful work of the flesh then get rid of it, no matter how small it may be in your life, no matter how small it may be in your heart, or how infrequently it is practiced, get rid of it, and don't even start with the thoughts of how much I can get away with and still go to heaven.

Listen if you never have one drink, you will never get caught up with drunkenness, if as a single person you never put yourself into a compromising situation in a relationship you will never be caught up in fornication, if as a married person you never even begin to look at other women with lust, you will never be caught in adultery. If king David had not continued to gaze and Bathsheba and rather fled the temptation, a whole lot of sin could have been avoided and many lives could have been saved.

If you never begin to entertain any of these things in your heart you will never be caught in the sin of practicing such things. This is why I been telling you this whole series to check your heart, check yourself on the inside, check yourself honestly, and see, do I harbor or practice such things in my heart, if I do, repent of it and pray to God and ask Him to remove it, cast it far from you so that it doesn't have a chance to grow into some work of the flesh and outward evidence of sin that will keep you from that kingdom

Because it is as Paul says with very plain words;

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.

And trust me, there is no sin, no pleasure, nor any act in this list that is worth living in... in exchange for that kingdom. And yet we see Christians living in them all over the place and giving up their place in that kingdom.

Because you see, the kingdom is coming. Jesus is coming. There is a kingdom coming with Christ as its King and it is this kingdom that you do not want to miss, because if you miss this kingdom, you miss eternity with God.

This is the kingdom the whole bible has been pointing forward to. The pre flood believers, the Jews of the Old Testament, the saints of the New Testament, all of them have been looking forward to this kingdom.

And to show us this, it starts from the very first chapters of the bible it begins with the promise of redemption and of a redeemer, in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 God says;

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And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

And then only 9 chapters later, God promised to Abram the covenant he was going to make with him and his people and promised him a land, a posterity and a spiritual blessing,

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Saying in Genesis 12 verses 1 to 3;

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

And for the next few minutes, I will give you scriptures in showing us this kingdom. Because it is only from scripture that we can know about this kingdom.

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In 2 Samuel God promised to King David a son who would rule forever and of whose kingdom there would be no end saying;

"Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously,

11 "since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.

12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

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And then in Luke 1:32 and 33 the angel spoke to Mary the words about the coming messiah, her future Son, and the coming King saying;

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

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And when His second coming is revealed to us by Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 24 in verses 30 and 31 He says;

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

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And in prophecy of His coming in Zechariah chapter 12 verses 10 and 11 says;

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

11 "In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

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And then of fulfillment in Revelation chapter 20 verse 4 John says;

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is that kingdom, this is the kingdom Paul is speaking about, this is the kingdom the Jews, and church age saints have been looking forward to for thousands of years already. it is coming and when you look at the world around us... it is almost here. If the rapture happened today, then within 7 years we could be in that kingdom.

And then from scripture I also want to give you some of the reasons this Kingdome will be so wonderful.

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Because it will be a time of peace according to Micah chapter 4, in verses 2 through 4;

Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3 He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

And then also in Isaiah 32:17 and 18

17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,

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It will be a time of joy according to Isaiah 61 verse 7;

Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, And instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be theirs.

and then in verse 10 and 11;

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Listen some will be resurrected into that kingdom, some will be raptured into that kingdom, some who survive the tribulation will enter that kingdom, and one of the most amazing things is that at the start of this kingdom, the entire kingdom will be made up entirely of believers, of those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the redeemer. From the beginning of creation to the second coming of Christ, every single believer, saint, follower of God whether resurrected, alive or raptured will be in that kingdom.

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And that is why the millennium will be a time of obedience according Jeremiah 31:33 and 34 saying;

"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

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This is why it will be a time of holiness Isaiah 35 verse 8a says;

*A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called
the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it,
But it shall be for others.*

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It will be a time of truth Isaiah 65 verses 16 and 17;

*So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless
himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth
Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former
troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from
My eyes.*

*17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And
the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

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A time of full knowledge of God Isaiah 11:9

*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For
the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the
waters cover the sea.*

and Habakkuk 2:14;

*For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory
of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.*

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And most of all Christ will rule as King, Isaiah 9 verses 6 and 7 and
chapter 11 in verse 1 through 10;

*For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the
government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be
called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will
be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From
that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of
hosts will perform this.*

And then chapter 11;

*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a
Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

3 His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;

4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

10 ¶ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

And then as the final one, in Matthew 19 verses 28 and 29 Jesus Himself says;

"Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

And I give you all this scripture to ask you; are YOU waiting for this kingdom?

Are you looking forward to this kingdom?

Are you living your life expecting to be part of this kingdom?

Listen I didn't just give you a whole bunch of scripture verses to explain to you what the kingdom will be like...

I want you to want that kingdom, I want you to desire that kingdom, I want you to strive for that kingdom above anything else in this world, and overcome all the things that keep us from going there, and that includes all the things of Paul's list.

yes, those things that are in Paul's list when he said;

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

Do you really want to enter that kingdom? Because I am truly amazed at the people who say they know about the kingdom of God and yet still live for the pleasures found here on earth. That people exchange the great and glorious kingdom that is coming for sinful passing pleasures of the flesh of this passing world.

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Listen John tells us in 1 John chapter 2 starting in verse 15, he says;

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

OH, that we would all choose life in Jesus Christ and no longer be participants of the works of the flesh, just as Paul says in Romans chapter 6 verse 23;

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For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And I say these things that we would look to the kingdom, look to the new heavens and the new earth, that we would look to an eternity with God the Father and with Jesus Christ His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And not look to the pathetic passing pleasures of this world and its sins. But that we would look first into our hearts and get rid of the works of the flesh that may be there, and then look to Jesus and that coming kingdom of God that is on the horizon.

Because if you are not entering that kingdom the only other place you will be entering at the end of your life... is hell!

That IS the only other option, when Paul says ‘that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God’ listen, it is those who practice such things who will inherit hell for all eternity.

And so in conclusion, we have covered many things in the first half of this series, and we have looked at many aspects of the heart in looking at these works of the flesh of Galatians chapter 5. We have looked at each one of these works of the flesh in both the outward workings of our bodies and also the inward workings of our own heart, when they begin as the little beginnings of sin.

Because if we let them grow, these works of the flesh then turn into something we practice and as Paul says, those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. And I have asked you repeatedly to look at your own heart, at some of the dark recesses of your soul and make sure that these things are not found there. And if they are, then get rid of them, If you find any of these things growing in your life or are practiced in your heart, get rid of them, pray to God and ask for forgiveness, change your mind and run away from them, because none of these passing pleasures of the world are worth giving up that kingdom.

We see so many churches these days making excuses for some of these sins, make exception clauses for such sins, pastors endorsing all kinds of works of the flesh and telling the people that they are ok with God in continuing in such sinful acts.

Brothers and sisters let us rather listen to God's word and as to what Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:11 saying; 'O man of God, flee these things...'. Flee from the sexual sins of Paul's list, flee those things we have put in place before our God, flee those feelings that lead to such things as hatred and jealousy and envy, flee those things that destroy the Christians character and eternal life in the process and let us pursue the things of God.

Run from these things because what Paul is saying is real, that those who practice these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. And not only will they not inherit the kingdom, but they will not inherit eternal life either. But rather will find them in that other place the bible calls hell.

I don't believe in a once-saved-always-saved position, and I'm not a Calvinist in believing that there are those who are predestined to that place of torment either.

I believe in what the bible teaches, in that we are saved by grace through faith, for it is the gift of God, and that he who repents and believes in Jesus Christ will have eternal life with Him. But also that if we continue to practice or continue to live in such things as Paul lists here in Galatians and in other places of scripture, we forfeit our salvation, we forfeit our salvation for the sinful pleasures of this world, and give up our right and claim to be in that kingdom of God.

Brothers and sisters, I fear at what sins are being preached as ok over the pulpits of our land, I fear the judgment that some will face for teaching error according to what God's word really says. I fear that there will be those who will pass from this life into the next thinking they are on their way to heaven, but will find themselves in the depths of hell instead.

Listen these are not just my words of warning, these are God's words, these are God's words, and this is what He says... not me, I'm just the messenger, I'm just one who relays the same words of God here on Sunday morning that you are already reading in your bibles throughout the week.

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And if there is one message I could leave with you in this conclusion, it would be the same one I started with,...

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Number one, be in the word, read it, study it, meditate on it, be in it every day, let it be your guide in all things of your life, because this is God speaking to you.

The Sunday morning preacher, he's just there to give you that extra edifying boost on your day of rest, the real power is allowing God to speak to you directly from His word.

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Number two, pray, pray to God about your struggles, about your temptations, about the things you are burdened with, and remember with every temptation or trial we may face there is always the way of escape.

Prayer is the most powerful weapon you have against the evils of this world and in the requests made to God for help in your time of need.

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Three, walk in faith, walk fully trusting the one who is speaking to you by His word and walk knowing that we are walking in truth.

Walking worthy of the calling with which you were called as Ephesians 4:1 says and walk in faith.

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And lastly, when you do these things you will have peace, not as the world gives but as Jesus Gives, you will have peace knowing you are walking and living and doing God's will and in doing so you will be heirs of His Kingdome.

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And be ready for His kingdom.

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Being ready, for the Son of Man is coning at an hour you do not expect.

Well may the Lord bless us as we continue to read his word, pray and walk in faith because we have finally finished the first half of this series, in looking at the works of the flesh given by Paul, and starting next month, Lord willing we will begin with the fruits of the Spirit.