

Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit

Part 16

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:3-8

INTRO:

Well we have come to sin that has been with man pretty much since the beginning of creation. It has plagued man since the first incident it occurred, man's history is riddled with the accounts of it including the bible. Books and stories have been written about it, movies have played about it, songs have been written about it, and it seems that every time one turns on the news it has happened again to somebody somewhere. It is almost as if man is obsessed with it in one form or another of this thing called murder.

And when you look at biblical history, secular history, world history, it is something that we will probably not get rid of anytime soon either.

Well we have come to this work of the flesh and sin of murder in Paul's list, a very outright and obvious works of the flesh, and some of you may even think 'surly with this word murders... we could just check off the box and go right on by... right'. Because I am sure none of us is guilty of this sin. True... I could give you a short, sermon in looking at the sins of others, of Cain and of David, and of any other murderer in the bible, That would be the easy way out, by having us focus on other people's sins and not our own.

But it would be a message that would leave me feeling empty inside empty because there is more to this word than just checking off a box and reading on by. And it would have left you empty headed to some of the reality of this sin and blissfully happy in not knowing some of the deeper truths about this word.

You see, it would be a similar thing when the Lord spoke to Israel through the prophet Hosea in chapter 4 verse 6 saying;

'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

Because I think, that is the same thing that is happening to Christians in our day, when there is no knowledge of sin, no teaching of sin, no exposing of sin, the people go astray, and not just astray, but as the verse says my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Ignorance is not always bliss, maybe for the temporal moment, but never in light of eternity. Just as the beginning of Proverbs 5 verse 23 speaking of the uneducated man it says;

He shall die for lack of instruction...

And if there is one thing I do not want you to leave a Sunday morning service with, is to leave with a lack of instruction. I do not want you to go home empty headed, and blissfully free and ignorant of sin. Because we are seeing too much of this these days, too many churches already do that these days, too many pastors just check off the boxes of sin and say with a smile, ‘well it doesn't apply to us so let us read on’.

See we have a saying we use here in our day and goes like this of ‘someone falling through the cracks’ it is an idiom depicting people who have become left behind, unnoticed by the majority, or forgotten in the forward progression of the larger group. And what can happen in the church is that there maybe someone that is falling through the ‘cracks’ in regard to some sin that is never mentioned or addressed. And they fall through, being lost forever because of a lack of knowledge, because of a lack of instruction, because of a lack of preaching of a preacher who stands behind the pulpit and refused to speak out on sin.

That is what many pastors are doing these days, it is as if some pastors have no fear of God about misinforming the people about sin, ‘just check off the box, make everyone feel good, and go home’.

They maybe preach some warm and fuzzy love and acceptance message and about having tolerance of other people’s views if they are not too conservative and never mention the sins creeping into the congregation.

Yes, we are saved by grace through faith, Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8;

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

But as I see it there is no grace if we willfully live in known sin, there is no excuse when we live in things contrary to God’s word, there is no fear of God in the pastors who preach and teach that certain sins are ok with God because His grace covers everything.

One of my greatest fears is to preach and teach error, especially when it comes to realms of our salvation, or your right standing with God.

I fear the judgment some pastors will face in having preach on some sin as being ok with God and continue to explain some exception clause for the sins people are living in.

And as a pastor myself, I cannot imagine myself walking around in heaven, knowing that others are not there because the error I may have taught in my preaching.

But then again, if we look back at the message I did on heresies, I noted that heresy is the choosing for oneself a position on an issue, and if that position is contrary to what God's word says and is, then the final verse says that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. And then I really have to wonder, what heresies can pastors teach or endorse that will keep people from the kingdom of God and still be allowed to go there themselves?

For me it is a very sobering thought, but I fear that for many others it never even gets a second thought or even a first thought for that matter. As the scriptures says in the Old Testament;

'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

People die because they simply check off the boxes and keep reading; pastors leave out critical teaching because they check off the boxes for the people and keep preaching. Churches are filled with all kinds of problems and sin because as a collective make sure they check off each other's boxes and keep going in the same direction the church has been going... which very often is down.

Never stopping to take a good hard look at what the deeper meaning is with the boxes they are checking off and the lives they are living and with the issues scripture is addressing. They are in fact destroying one another with soft hand and gentile words in sending each other off to hell by not mentioning sin.

And so even when we come to something as obvious as murder, the word we have before us here today, even then, let us not just check off and say, ‘nope that doesn't apply to me’ and read on.

O. MURDERS

But, that we would again stop and think about what is Paul talking about or meaning with this word?

Because remember who is Paul talking to? Look at your bibles, Galatians chapter 5 verse 13, who is he addressing? Third word in verse 13, anyone want to tell me what it is and who he is talking too?

Brethren, he is talking to the members and believers of the church, the Christians, the ones who name the name of Christ and warns them about allowing these works of the flesh into their lives.

Because you must remember that this list is not a list that is given to warn the unbelievers of the world, of the things they are not to be doing. No, this is a list that shows the believer what we are no longer to be doing. These are works of the flesh, works of the carnal man, of the soulish man, of the believer who does not know all the ways of God and only lives in the ways of the earthly mind set of man.

Listen if you missed it in the beginning, this list is for the believer. This list Paul gives is for the Christians. Listen this list is given to those who are believers in Jesus Christ who continue to entertain sin, walk with fleshly sins in their hearts, and a warning that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And as I said earlier, my fear is that there are pastors out there who preach and teach that some things in this list can be explained away with other scriptures, by the twisting of scriptures, and make people feel happy in their sins as they are on their merry way to hell, including that pastor if he is a teacher of heresy according to the final verses.

Now I know that this is a longer introduction than usual, but this longer introduction was given so that even when we come to the issue of murder, we don't just go on by and think that doesn't apply to me... and read on.

Every word of God applies to me if I am a Christian, Jesus Himself quoted the words from the Old Testament in Luke 4:4 saying;

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

How many words of God? 'Every word of God'.

And so when Paul says in Galatians chapter 5 verse 16 that we are to 'Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh' and the word 'murders' comes up in that list, is it then not a word we are to look at and make sure that it is not a part of our life. To look carefully at every word of God in relation to this word and the thoughts Paul gives us here. Well it is, and even when Paul talks about murders in the word of God, let us not just go idly by thinking, well that doesn't apply to me so off I go.

And so, if we begin with looking at this word, the word Paul uses is the word phonos *fon'-os* Strong's number 5408, and is defined in the Online Bible Greek Lexicon as;

Murder or slaughter

Murder in the Encarta dictionary says it is;

The crime of killing another person deliberately and not in self-defense or with any other extenuating circumstance recognized by law.

The Merriam Webster dictionary says;

The crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing a person

Now one thing we must note here right away is that there is a difference between killing, and murder.

If we look at the Old Testament word that is used in the Ten Commandments where it says ‘you shall not murder’ this is the Hebrew word *ratsach raw-tsakh*’ Strong's number 07523 and means the unlawful or illegal killing of another human being. The word to kill is the word is *harag haw-rag*’ which is simply the word to kill something or someone. You could say that murder is killing but killing is not always murder.

We can kill all kinds of things, we kill animals for food, we kill flies and mosquitoes because of annoyance, we kill mice, rats and squirrels because they are pests to our homes. Even police and government have been given the right to kill other humans if they pose a lethal threat to others in society. If a police officer is called to the scene of an armed robbery, and he ends up shooting and killing the robber, this is not classed as murder, but a legal and justifiable killing.

Murder is that unlawful killing of another human, if the armed robber shot and killed the store clerk, he would be charged with murder, the unlawful killing of another person. This is why we say someone was killed in an accident at work, we don't say they were murdered in an accident, unless it was deliberate and intentional. We also say I just killed a mosquito we don't say I just murdered a mosquito.

This is why the Old Testament says you shall not murder, however some translations write it as you shall not kill, this is not a proper translation. Throughout all the Old Testament people were call by God to kill animals, to kill wicked nations, to kill wicked people from amongst them, and to then command 'you shall not kill' is a contradiction of scripture. If the commandment was 'you shall not kill' then from the words of Dennis Prager;

We should all be pacifists and vegetarians.

And so the main thing we are to focus on is that we are not to murder, to take a life in some illegal unjustifiable means. As the Merriam Webster dictionary says;

The crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing a person

Now I know we have all checked off the box on this one, none of us, as far as the rest of us know, has physically murdered anyone. And this is a good thing.

But remember, throughout the series it is not only the outward external sins that we have been focusing on, but rather at the heart where such things begin to develop. In the beginning I gave you the example of King David and his sin with Bathsheba, how this sin of adultery began as seeds within his heart, how temptations mixed with desires and enticements were ignited into becoming this sin of adultery. But then the thoughts of murder began to grow in King David as well, as we say they always begin in the heart.

In the Old Testament there were all kinds of laws to judge and regulate such things as murder and accidental killing. In Deuteronomy chapter 19 in verses 3 through 6 Moses commanded the people concerning such things as accidental killing, and says;

3 "You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.

4 "And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past—

5 "as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live;

6 "lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past.

The key is that he had not hated the victim in time past, that is a hate issue, that ties into the message when we talked about hate, what are we not to hate... people, hate is one of those that begin in the mind, as I have said from the beginning, these sins begin as some of those little things we allow into our minds.

And nowhere is this better explained than by Jesus in Matthew chapter 5. As you probably knew I would be taking you to this passage somewhere in the message. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus give a very vivid picture of our thought life, of our mind in some of the things He is talking about. In Matthew chapter 5 verse 21 He says;

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

That is a truth found throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Gods rebuke to Cain in the murder of his brother in Genesis. In Exodus it is found in the Ten Commandments, in Leviticus it is reaffirmed with the law of the death penalty. The laws of man slaughter are further elaborated in the book of Numbers, then re-explained in Deuteronomy and so on, there is a lot of scripture that deals with this sin of murder. But then in the New Testament Jesus goes on to say;

22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Now there are three things that must be noted in this passage of Jesus, areas that we need to pay attention to regarding what He is saying; and the first one has to do with anger.

Now remember anger, or orge *or-gay'* can be ok, but there are places where it is not, and it has to do with the object of our anger, remember the first one in Jesus verse was;

"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Remember Vine's said anger 'suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge' and if this anger is without cause, a form of continual hatred without reason, such a one is in danger of the judgment. Note this judgment is the same judgment that is used for the case of murderer in the previous verse.

Now the second one in the verse is;

And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council.

This word 'Raca' is a word that is only used one time in the scriptures and means something that is empty or worthless, and the thinking is that you think a brother is empty headed or worthless.

In our day we would say something like that person is ‘a waste of skin’ or someone who is ‘good for nothing’ and it is a mindset that begins in the heart. A view that comes to us from the recess of our heart and the evil that comes from this is thinking that another person, or another human being is not worth anything, even though he is made in God’s image and has the personhood from God, we view them as worthless.

This is just as bad as thinking or performing murder, this is the reality that Jesus was teaching, that when you think that someone is worthless, it is equal to murder. And I might add a note here, it is this kind of thinking of where other people are worthless, became the basis of one of the greatest atrocities of our modern world we now know as the holocaust.

The Nazi’s had such a warped mindset of the Jews, in that that killing a Jew was no different for them, then you killing a mosquito.

I think this is a prime example of how Raca is to be depicted in the human heart. Having the thoughts of another person being an empty useless waste of skin. And shocking as it may seem, this was the mind set of many Protestant, Reformed and Lutheran pastors in Germany in the 1930’s who went along with this horrible sin.

Can you see why this is such a vivid rebuke of Jesus, of where this mind set will lead the person, the party, the nation if left unchecked to reality of God's word?

But that is not the only one, the third and final line in the verse says;

But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

In this part of the verse it is the expression 'you fool' that is in question, the word used in this sentence is Strong's number 3474 and the Greek word moros *mo-ros'* and does anyone want to guess what English word we get from moros *mo-ros'*... moron, this moros *mo-ros'* is defined in the Strong's dictionary as someone who is;

Dull or stupid, heedless, morally blockheaded or absurd.

And when you look at the 72 times the English word fool is used in the New King James Version, 60 of them are used in the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

And just for example the words says things like;

It is the fool who says in his heart there is not God

It is the fool who spreads slander

It is the fool who has not delight in understanding

And as a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly

It is the fool who goes after the immoral woman as depicted in the book of Proverbs, after the seductress who flatters with her words, it is that dull, stupid, heedless blockhead who despises all instruction and wisdom and guidance only to repeat his folly again, folly that leads to death.

And if this is the mind set you have of your brother as the verse says and you say to him 'you fool' you are in danger of hell fire because of the heart issue that is within in you.

Are there fools in our world, yes of course, are we to allow such angry, murderous thoughts to be harbored in our heart to bring us to the point where lash out at our brother calling him a worthless good for nothing, waste of skin and a dull, stupid heedless blockhead? Tell me who is the one standing closer to murder? The empty heedless blockhead or the one who has these thoughts about him?

Warren Wiersbe writes in his commentary;

Jesus did not say that anger leads to murder; He said that anger *is* murder.

There is a holy anger against sin, but Jesus talked about an unholy anger against people.

The word He used in Matthew 5:22 means "a settled anger, malice that is nursed inwardly." Jesus described a sinful experience that involved several stages. First there was *causeless anger*. This anger then exploded into *words*: "Raca—empty-headed person!" These words added fuel to the fire so that the person said, "You fool—rebel!"

Anger is such a foolish thing. It makes us destroyers instead of builders. It robs us of freedom and makes us prisoners. To hate someone is to commit murder in our hearts

EOQ

Now don't put up your hands, but are we guilty of mental murder in our minds this past week, month, or year? Well I can almost guarantee you have, because it often comes up in conversation when we talk about our current political leader of the leading political party. Do we think and pray for his salvation or do we think I would rather like to see him get hit by a bus?

Or how about the illustration I gave you from hatred message, I noted one of the things that can make us very angry very fast was the issue over abortion, because I believe... as do most of you, believe that this act of killing perfectly unborn children fits what we would class as murder.

The crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing a person

And the great debate always rages over exactly when does someone become a person, what is all part and not part of a woman's body, when do we call it a life and not just a collection of cells and tissue.

Well since we are talking about murder and abortion, I'll give you something to think about. You see the bible never tries to explain or defend the fact that the unborn person in the womb are people. It takes it for granted that the reader understands that this big bulge women have in their lower abdomen after conception is not some strange growth of tissue, or some extension of her own body. No the bible takes it for granted that the person reading the text is an intelligent enough person to understand that the thing growing and developing inside of her is another person. For example;

Genesis chapter 16 verse 11;

After Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as wife, Hagar conceived she became despised in the sight of Sarai, Hagar fled, and after she fled the Lord found her and spoke to her as verse 11 says;

And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child,

In 2 Samuel 12:14, Bathsheba sent a message to King David and said:

"I am with child."

And in Matthew chapter 1, in describing our Lord Jesus Christ it says in verse 18;

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

The bible takes it completely for granted that it is a child, a person that is in the womb yet to be formed to completion, waiting to be born.

Even the Lord God spoke to Jeremiah that before anything was formed from those initial division of cells after conception in chapter 1 verse 5 He tells him;

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

This word formed has the idea of fashioning into shape, molding, or squeezing into shape as a potter with clay.

And it is this notion that before even anything began to take shape the Lord knew Jeremiah the person , from the moment of viable conception he knew him, even when there were only a couple of cells. And the bible takes all of this for granted that the reader understands this concept, that personhood begins at conception.

But what has happened is that our society has come along and uses fancy technical words to detach us from this idea of someone being with child. And they use fancy scientific words like zygote, blastocyst, embryo, fetus, and then slather other words over it like tissue, cells, incomplete matter, to detach themselves from it being called a child... to detach themselves from murder.

Because if murder is;

The crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing a person

Then abortion is murder. That morally unlawful and completely unjustifiable killing of another person. And like I said in the hatred message, what do we then think about when we think about abortion and some of those doctors? What do we think about when we hear the pro choice activists chant ‘my body my choice’, what do we think about when we hear that there are up to 73 million abortions a year?

That is 5 persons every 2 seconds.

Like I said we can get pretty angry pretty fast when we start talking about this crime. When we think about what is going on in those clinics and what those doctors are doing, we get very angry and thoughts of murder easily flow through us in what we would like to do to those people don’t we?

And we begin to have thoughts of; if someone killed such a doctor it would be no more disturbing to me than someone killing a fly.

Are we guilty of mental murder in us when it comes to this topic?

Or do we think ‘Lord I pray that they would repent, repent of what they are doing, repent from the crime they are committing against your children, repent and seek your face and forgiveness’, because the place they are going if they do not will be far worse than any crime they ever committed here on this earth.

Do we wish for their conversion and repentance from the good news found in the gospel... or do we wish that the Lord would smite them dead and send them to hell instead?

It's a heart issue, and what we allow to originate in our heart is what we will become, as the beginning of Proverbs 23:7 says 'for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he...'

It is how we deal with these things of our heart that influence who and what we are, if we harbor such things as hatred in our heart, if we harbor such things as envy in our heart and these can all come together as harboring murder in our hearts.

Turn in your bibles to the book of first John. John tells us very plainly about keeping hatred in our hearts and allowing it to grow into murderous thoughts, in 1 John chapter 2 starting in verse 9 I'll read verses 9 through 11 and he says;

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

This darkness as most commentaries note is the darkness and blindness that hinders such a one from seeing, walking and living in the truth of the word. As Albert Barnes says;

love to the brethren is a central virtue in religion, and when a man has not that, his mind is entirely clouded on the whole subject, and he shows that he knows nothing of its nature.

EOQ

But then John expounds this thought even further in the next chapter by saying in chapter 3 verses 14 and 15;

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Albert Barns again notes:

That is, he has the spirit of a murderer; he has that which, if it were acted out, would lead him to commit murder, as it did Cain. The private malice, the secret grudge, the envy which is cherished in the heart, is murderous in its tendency, and were it not for the outward restraints of human laws, and the dread of punishment, it would often lead to the act of murder.

EOQ

But there is a deeper dread than just social punishment, it is as John says ‘you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.’

We have looked at the sin of hatred, and we know we are not to hate other people, we have looked at envy, and we know where the ends of this evil feeling will take us, and now we have this very hard teaching that if we allow these thought of hatred and envy and murder to fester and grow in our hearts, and allow them to become part of our mind and thinking thoughts of murder... that such a one has no eternal life abiding in him.

Listen these are not my words, this is the Word of God speaking these things. It is John who says that no murderer has eternal life, it is Paul who says that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdome of God, I'm just the preacher who brings these things to light so that you may learn what the word of God says, so that you may live!

And not walk in darkness in leaving a Sunday morning service without learning the truth. But rather that we would walk in the light, and in love. If you have such things as hatred in your heart, get rid of it, if you have such things as envy in your heart, get rid of it, if there are any of these things that we have covered in the last 16 messages... get rid of them? Because these are things that will take you to hell if you let them rule your life.

Including the one we are looking at today, murder, thoughts of murder, they can come from thought of envy and hatred that lead your mind to places and things it should not be going too.

Listen if you are still in 1 John turn over to chapter 4, chapter 4 and listen to verse 13 and 14, it says;

*13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us,
because He has given us of His Spirit.*

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

Listen, the Father has sent the Son, Jesus Christ, as savior of the world, and listen, that also includes those people you may hate, that includes those you look down upon in this world, that includes all those abortion doctors in our world who are killing thousands upon thousands of unborn children in our world every day, every second.

Jesus died for them as well, Jesus wants them to repent and come to the salvation of Christ just like you did!

But if I still think that ‘no Lord this is such an unimaginable sin and wickedness and I want them to burn in hell forever because of what they are doing and have done and pay for all the wickedness they have done to the unborn in our world’ ‘I want them to die in their sin and go to hell...’, if I think like this... then I’m not really ready for heaven either am I?

Jesus died for the world, He is the Savior of the whole world, and that means everyone. It is times like this where I wish I could be a Calvinist and simply think well God has given them a reprobate mind and predestined them to hell anyway, and I can’t change that, it how God wanted it. But I can’t believe that... Jesus died for the world and Jesus is savior of the world.

We know that God will execute perfect justice on this unrepentant world, we do not need to consume ourselves with such thoughts or cares, our thoughts are to spread the gospel, share the gospel, and show the world that Christ has come as Savior of the world, including the people who murder.

Are we minded of the things of God, are we that light in the world, as Jesus said in John 8:12;

..."I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Are we spreading that light to others in our world... or am I still walking in darkness, in that old self, in the way Paul describes us as how

...we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Or are we as Jude commands us by saying;

but save others with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Because remember it is our Lord Jesus Christ that said;

22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

And so in conclusion, I have to ask myself... what are my thoughts, how do I think of others, what emotions am I letting run loose in my mind and my? What things am I harboring in my heart. And even though we checked off the box that talks about murder, agreeing that we have not physically murdered anyone in our life. Can we also check off that box in the thoughts and wishes of our heart.

That we could look into our soul and check off the box of murders there too. That we do not hang onto any of these sins that would hinder us in our walk for Jesus and cause us to stumble in our journey to eternity.

And even though we are not guilty of murder in the outward physical sense let us also not be guilty of murder in the mental inward spiritual sense.

Well may the Lord guide us and direct us by the Word of God in our life.