

Galatians 5:19-21 - the Works of the Flesh

I ran across this in an ad for a job search and career placement ad:

- "I'm stressed." Are you working harder but enjoying it less? Do you sometimes dread going into work?
- "I'm bored." Something's missing from life. I don't approach work on a Monday with any enthusiasm. Work is neither satisfying nor stimulating.
- "Life is too short!" Another birthday passes by and you are not working at what you like or maybe what you imagined you would be doing.
- "I'm trapped." Once fulfilling work seems to be less meaningful. You're restless but can't change or articulate what's wrong.

These are the basic questions that can't be answered by the works of the flesh, which will soon be obvious, but

The works of the flesh start with a basic question:

What do **I** want? - focused on self, not on God

Augustine's famous quote: "*Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.*"

two examples given for the Galatians were

- 1. adultery**
- 2. and fornication**

but you may substitute your favorite God substitute - greed, gluttony, drinking, self-centeredness, anger, TV, wild living, being good or religious, etc.

the main point is that your life is being motivated by something other than the Spirit, then instead of God initiating and growing fruit, then you'll initiate and try "works"

in the case of adultery and fornication, the works are

- 3. impurity**
- 4. and licentiousness**

but you may substitute your own favorite works - fighting, gossip, Bible study, good works, being better than the next person, etc.

the main point is that fruit satisfies, not works that are a substitute for genuine fruit, so since you decide that you can't do it on your own and you've already rejected God and His Word and standards, then you must try to manipulate God or your gods or others to get what you want to satisfy yourself.

The two basic ones mentioned here were

- 5. Idolatry** - make a god in the image you want to replace the God you've rejected.
- 6. and sorcery** - attempting to use magic, spells, drugs, etc. to force God or others to do what you want. - make God subordinate to your will and take away the free will of others.

Once again, you may substitute other less offensive works of the flesh - legalism, Bible worship, good works, keeping the law, etc.

but they are works and do not ultimately satisfy. They are your efforts at idolatry and sorcery as you try to manipulate God and the world into having to treat you well because you're a good person. There is an emptiness a hole that you know is there no matter how hard you try to deny it or to ignore it.

think of Paul. The harder he tried good works (persecuting the church) the more it failed to satisfy and the harder he had to try and the more he focused his anger and sense of failure (need to do more) by blaming someone other than himself and his own alienation, then his results are the same as ours:

- 7. enmities**
- 8. strife**
- 9. jealousy**
- 10. anger**
- 11. rivalries**
- 12. dissensions**
- 13. factions**

We know that we should not be engaging in these even as we do so. We lie to ourselves and others that it's not our fault, that our actions are somebody else's fault. This makes us even angrier and less content and fulfilled, but instead of looking at ourselves and our need to change from works to fruit, we look at others, often the objects of our works, and feel something so terrible that we can't admit it

14. envy - we see others who aren't like us and are happier and more content, and we have an envy for what they have that we can't seem to find no matter how hard we work at it the wrong way.

There's only two choices: either we're wrong and need to change or the world's just not fair and why should we keep trying.

Since we can't admit that we're wrong, then we either have to give up or try harder, but either way, the results are the same and we indulge in

- 15. drunkenness**
- 16. carousing**
- 17. and things like these.**

Once again, you may substitute your favorite acts of desperation if these don't suit you.

the point is that our works of the flesh or the old nature do not lead to satisfaction or contentment, but leads to a downward path of frustration and pain the culminates in a life that is out of control.

Remember the fruit of the spirit and what it culminates in:

love of God that leads to
joy and
peace that surpasses understanding and leads you into a life of
patience and
kindness that is shown by acts of
generosity,
faithfulness, and
gentleness that culminates in a life of
self-control.

It's a very easy test to see if you are enjoying fruit or struggling with works: what are the results that you're getting and where are you being led?