

The Condemning Works of the Flesh being practiced in the church today!

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. . . . And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

(Galatians 5:19-21,24 KJV)

Today what is needed is a clear understanding of these works of the flesh because some of them are practiced continually by most of the Body of Christ without knowing it. This is because of the insufficient translation of the Greek words and the interpretation of some of these very serious sins that condemn anyone who practices them. So let us look at each of these words more carefully, especially those which we have been taught in our Christian practices are even respectable and something to be honored and unfortunately held in high esteem as a matter of pride.

First is the word "**adultery**." Most people understand this to accurately mean the involvement in sexual relations of two individuals, at least one of which is in a marriage covenant with a different person. It is condemned throughout scripture, punishable by death under the Old Covenant (Lev. 20:10), and excommunication and spiritual death if unrepentant of under the New Covenant (1 Cor. 5 & 6). We are warned of the treachery of this sin, treachery meaning the breaking of covenant (Mal. 2:14-16). The Lord Jesus defines adultery very well when He said, "**But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery** (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18).

The next word is "**fornication**" which includes adultery, but also all other forms of sexual immorality, such as between two single people either of different or the same sex, incest, or bestiality. It is mentioned dozens of times in the New Testament, where we are told to **flee from it, abstain from it, keep away from it, do not commit it** as those who do such things **shall not inherit eternal life**. (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Matt. 15:19-20). It is

from the Greek word “porneia” from which we get the word “pornography,” pictures of all types of sexual immorality.

Next comes “**uncleanness**” which includes many types of sexual behavior either inside or outside of marriage, such as oral sex, self masturbation, and anal sex. God has designed our organs for natural means within the marriage covenant, and we are not to defile the marriage bed with “uncleanness” but understand the natural fondling and caressing of one’s marriage partner. **“Let marriage be held in honor (esteemed worthy, precious, of great price, and especially dear) in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be undefiled (kept undishonored); for God will judge and punish the unchaste [all guilty of sexual vice] and adulterous.”** (Heb. 13:4 AMP)

The next word is “**lasciviousness**” from the Greek word “aselgeia,” and according to Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon means “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence.” According to the Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich Lexicon (BAG) it adds “debauchery, sensuality, and sexual excess.”

Next we have “**idolatry**” which means literally “the worship of false gods.” In scripture this includes the worship of Mammon, covetousness (Col. 3:5). This means money, or anything that we put before God, hold as more important than serving God according to His word, is an idol. This can be material possessions, religious or non-religious organizations, buildings, people, even family members.

The next word is “**witchcraft**” and comes from the word “pharmakeia.” Thayer’s first definition given is “the use or the administration of drugs.” This is where we get the word “pharmacy.” Certainly there are good medicines, but many today are harmful, and actually killing people, all for the purpose of drug companies making money! The fraud of deceitful research and advertising is overwhelming, and unfortunately so many Christians yield to ungodly advice because of their own idolatry of bowing to the advice of ungodly men rather than God’s advice. I have been involved in natural healing and health for almost 40 years, and you can read about this and God’s ways in my book, *Holy Nutrition*, which is downloadable free from my web site, www.JohnRothacker.org.

A second meaning of the word is “poisoning.” For example, man’s chemotherapy actually kills the good cells in our bodies as well as the bad ones, damaging our immune system that is so needed for health and healing. God’s chemotherapy only kills the bad ones but builds up the good ones. Read about it, and the choice is yours.

The third meaning of the word given is “sorcery,” and involves the use of “magical arts,” which actually involves demonic spirits. This includes all kinds of witchcraft, occult practices, and New Age philosophies.

The next word given in this list is “**hatred.**” It is helpful to know that this means a “great” or “intense dislike.” When understood as such, it is much more understood as applicable for us. The spirit of hatred is being promoted today as never before by Satan against Christians and Jews, and those who stand for the scriptures and the support of God’s Covenant with Abraham and the Land of Israel.

Next is “**variance,**” a word not used much today, but meaning “contention, strife, wrangling, quarreling.”

Next is another word not used much today, “**emulations,**” most commonly translated “jealousy.” It is “an envious resentment against a successful rival or the possessor of any coveted advantage.” It has application to what we shall be emphasizing.

Next is “**wrath,**” an “impulse and outburst of anger, heated passion.”

Next we have “**strife,**” the plural of the Greek word “eritheia,” which is a root work of the flesh that pertains to the emphasis we want to look at more closely in this little study. It is defined as “a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts.” It is derived from the Greek word “erithos,” meaning “a working for hire, a hireling.” In classical Greek it meant “a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.” It is often translated “selfish ambition” and “selfishness.”

This is a perfect introduction to our next two words, “**seditions**” and “**heresies**” which we need to examine more thoroughly, and is the reason for this study, as they are seldom if ever translated with meaning that is applicable to the sectarian bondage that has developed in the Church with such increasing diversity since The Reformation.

First the word, “**seditions**” which is from the plural form of the Greek word “dichostasia.” It is from two Greek words, “dicha, apart” & “stasis, to stand,” meaning “to stand apart.” It simply means “divisions”!

The next word is, “**heresies,**” from the Greek word “airesies,” and 1) Comes from the root word “aireo” which means “act of taking, capture, the storming of a city.” 2) It means “a choosing, a choice.” 3) “That which is chosen, a chosen course of thought and action; hence one’s chosen opinion, tenet; according to the context, an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith (heresy).” 4) “A body of men separating themselves from others and following their own tenets [a sect or party]; as the

Sadducees, Acts 5:17; the Pharisees, Acts 15:5; 26:5; the Christians, Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22.”
 5) “Dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims: Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor.
 11:19” (Thayer’s).

Someone who does these things is “airetikos,” “schismatic, factious” (Thayer’s); someone “causing division” (BAG Lexicon); (Tit. 3:10). He is a “heretic” KJV; “factious man” NAS; “a divisive man” NKJV; “a man who is factious [a heretical sectarian and cause of divisions]” AMP.

To see how these “workings of the flesh” manifest today, let us study a portion of scripture that is usually misinterpreted when read or taught, but is so clear when properly understood with the true apostolic revelation of the oneness and unity that God started the church with and intends to restore in His true Body before His coming again.

In Acts 20:17-38 we find Paul calling for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come over to Miletus and join him for some final instruction as he told them that they would not see him again. They were very sad to hear this, and I’m sure listened with all their hearts as he had taught and warned every one of them “night and day with tears” that men would arise to divide the church.

Here is where we need to see what was their structure and relationship with one another there in the city of Ephesus. The apostolic revelation that is consistent throughout the scriptures is that there is only one church. The Lord Jesus Christ is head of that church, and is present as head whenever believers come together, whether it be only two or three, or hundreds, or thousands. Next, the apostles (men like Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, and others listed in the scriptures, which I go into detail on in my books such as *The Public Ministry of Women* and *The church*, also available free from my web site, www.JohnRothacker.org) ordained men of God in every city (Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23), who were called **elders**, who were appointed as **overseers** by the Holy Spirit, from the word “episcopos,” sometimes translated “bishops,” who were responsible to “feed” (KJV), and actually the Greek word is **shepherd** (NAS, NKJV, AMP), the Latin word “pastor,” the flock, considered one singular flock in the city. Paul wrote that their first responsibility was to themselves, all of the elders of the city, the “presbytery,” as the word for elder is “presbyter,” and then secondly to the rest of the believers in the city.

This is where we must see that this church in Ephesus was united, they were not divided into separate congregations with individual “Church memberships” but were all taught that they were members of one universal body of believers. Obviously they often met in many different and variable places. In Corinth, for example, when maintaining togetherness but starting to exhibit sectarianism, the Christians were lovingly reprovved for their carnality (1 Cor. 1, 3). I go into great detail on this in my book, *The church*, which has 40 pages on “The true New Testament church,” 13 of which are just on this subject of church membership.

When we see that Paul was teaching the united elders of a city-wide church in Ephesus, and not elders of a congregation separated from other Christians or “congregations” in the city, we can then understand more accurately what he was warning them against. That was that “grievous wolves” would enter into the one flock united in the city, and even men from among themselves, Holy Spirit called and apostolically ordained elders, would arise that would be “**speaking perverse things**” in order to “**draw away disciples after themselves**” rather than allowing the saints to flow freely with understanding in the body of Christ in their city with all the other elders overseeing together the church in their city. And beloved, this is exactly what we have done in the body of Christ for centuries. We have divided the church into dozens, then hundreds, and now thousands of denominations and millions of congregations, all with their own separate membership, and then taught the people of God that this is what it should be, and that our particular structure with our particular doctrine is either a perfect example of a true New Testament church, or “The only true New Testament Church,” when in fact it is a carnal, sectarian structure, under the judgment of a Holy God who is grieved with our works of the flesh, our divisions! Our fellowship is to be based upon our relationship with Christ, not our doctrines (1 Cor. 1:9).

It is significant that this division is done by words that are “perverse,” from the Greek word “diastrepho” meaning “to distort, turn aside from the right path, to pervert, corrupt,” and the prefix “dia” when used in “composition” has a meaning of “rivalry” (Thayer’s).

This means until men and women of God see the truth of church structure, membership, and unity, and repent of “denominationalism” and “congregationalism,” of trying to build “their own church,” their own “separated” congregation with restrictive membership, and getting their carnal identity from this work of the flesh, from buildings and numbers and money, which is under the judgment of God and will be burned up as “wood, hay, and stubble,” the fulness of the outpouring of God’s Spirit in power and glory will not be manifested, and God’s end-time purposes for His church will not be realized! We must compliment and cooperate with one another, not criticize and compete with one another. And this is only possible under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as directed and energized by the Holy Spirit of the living God! And only God’s grace, mercy, and peace will bring this about!

Beloved, I hope that you can see the picture of what is recorded here in Acts 20, with the apostle’s final warning to all the united elders of the church in Ephesus about those who would divide the functioning unity of the church in their city by teaching a sectarian doctrine, and practicing sectarianism which Paul reveals is a work of the flesh that will condemn men’s souls to an eternal hell. This sin as practiced today is respectable and purposely pursued with zeal, and yet is condemned along with all kinds of sexual immorality, and other soul destroying works of the flesh.

The next work of the flesh listed that follows is appropriate in that it is the sin of **“envyings,”** that desire for what someone else has, in this case as applied today in what amounts to the envying for a **“division,”** a **“heresy.”** It is what carnal young men are taught to pursue by a carnal **“church,”** to **“build themselves a church,”** that springs from pride, from the condemning sin of selfish ambition. Our ambition should be to make disciples of the Lord, for His kingdom, not our own. To build according to His blueprints for the church, true apostolic revelations, not the imaginations and dreams of the carnal mind, not the traditions of men that nullify and make void the word of God.

The rest of the works of the flesh, **“murders, drunkenness, revellings** [carousing, excessive feasting and noisy drinking-parties], **and such like”** speak for themselves. And we need to be reminded that God is speaking through Paul when he writes of all these works of the flesh, **“of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”** (Gal. 5:19-21 KJV).

Beloved, we need to renounce and stop our carnal church memberships and teach the flock of God that their true and only membership is in the one true church, the body of Christ, and how to flow and be led of the Spirit of God in this body. May God give us the grace, mercy, and peace to fulfill this, His will, in these last and glorious days before His soon return! Remembering God added, **“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another** (Galatians 5:24-26 KJV).

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