

Exegetical Paper

April Jones – jonesa1@allianceu.edu

Alliance University

GCN 501

Professor Quijada

March 16, 2023

Galatians 5:16-23

¹⁶ This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.¹⁷ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.¹⁸ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, 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.²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (The Defined King James Bible,2015, Galatians 5:16-23).

Introduction

This is an epistle of Paul who wrote to the churches in Galatia that he had previously established. The premise of this letter is the justification of God's grace through faith. Paul's purpose for writing to the Galatians was because he heard they were being led astray by erroneous doctrine from a sect called Judaizers and were reverting to the ways of the mosaic law. In this passage Paul was comparing the difference between living the life of the Spirit against the ways of the law. I will discuss significance of the scripture passage for the time it was written and the applications thereof.

Interpretation

In Galatians 5:16, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (The Defined King James Bible, 2015). What Paul is telling the Galatians to do is to obediently submit to the indwelling Holy Spirit so that they do not succumb to their fleshly desires (Discover the Books of The Bible, 2023). When one continually chooses to submit to the Spirit then this demonstrates maturity as a Christian. Obtaining a level of maturity would make it difficult for heretics like the Judaizers to challenge one’s beliefs as they will be convicted and stand firm. However, the Christians will always face opposition between flesh and Spirit until they get to heaven.

In verse 17, Paul explains that the two opposing views of our sinful nature and the goodness of the Spirit is a battleground within that person. However, if one is being led by the Spirit then they would turn away from the fleshly desires (The Defined King James Bible, 2015). They are free from the mosaic laws when they follow the Spirit because it is the Spirit that is resisting the flesh and not the person in their own power as we are powerless without God. Verses 19 to 23 serves as a list contrasting the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit. Since Paul has taught this subject previously to the Galatians the need for an exhaustive list was not needed. He simply lists the attributes of each pathway as a reminder. The works of the flesh are adultery which is being unfaithful in the marriage. Fornication or unmarried or unlawful sexual intercourse. Uncleaness or moral evil or sensuality. Lasciviousness meaning unrestrained behavior. Idolatry and any other words worshipping other gods or anyone or anything rather than the one true God. Paul continues the list with witchcraft or sorcery, which the Greek word is pharmakeia which means drugs which were used in such practices. Sorcery may now include

magic spells and superstitions (Macdonald, 2016). An intense hatred towards others, variances or dissentions, emulations or jealousy, wrath or fits of anger, strife or fighting, heresies or false teaching, unlawful killings, or murders. Paul concludes with drunkenness and carousing, gluttony, and engaging in debauchery and preaches that those who practice in such behavior will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Spirit produce Christlike fruit beginning with agape love meaning love by choice and not because of an emotional or physical feeling (Macdonald, 2016). Paul resumes characterizing the Spirit with peace or sense of contentment, patience meaning longsuffering even in afflictions and annoyances, divine joy that could only come from a relationship with Christ, kindness or gentleness, meekness or humbleness, faith in God and sureness in our fellow Christian, and self-control in all things. Paul finishes by telling the Galatians that if everyone behaved in the way of the Spirit then laws would not be needed.

Application

As a Mental Health Counselor and a Christian, I believe it is important to educate clients about submission to the Spirit in conjunction with secular mental health treatments to augment their healing process. Learning to rely on the Spirit of God for strength and guidance when feeling out of control would provide that sense of calm during a mental storm as the Spirit is about self-control and peace. Clients in therapy sometimes feel guilty because of their sins. They have difficulty forgiving oneself for the transgression of values which is considered common in clients with moral injury (Maguen, 2022). It may benefit clients to encourage them to walk in the Spirit and glean from the freedom that it provides from their sins so that they free themselves from the guilt that they may be holding onto.

References

The Defined King James Bible. (2015). The Bible for Today Press

Discover the books of the Bible. (n.d.). *Discover the books of the bible commentary*. Retrieved

March 4, 2023, from <https://bible-studys.org/galatians-chapter-5-continued/>

Macdonald, W. (2016). *Believer's Bible Commentary* (2nd Ed.). (A. Farsta, Ed.). Thomas Nelson

Publishing

Maguen, S., Norman S.B. (2022). Moral injury. *PTSD Research Quarterly* 33(1). Retrieved

March 5, 2023, from: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/rq_docs/V33N1.pdf