

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Theme: Our Flesh vs. Jesus' Spirit

^{4:6} Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'

^{4:19} My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you...

^{5:13} For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. ^{6:1} Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Questions

1. What is the contrast between flesh and Spirit?
 - a. An opportunity for the flesh is NOT 'through love serve one another' (5:13). So, the flesh does not truly serve others (perhaps it can fake it for a while); it is self-centered.
 - b. The flesh consumes: bite, devour, consume (v.15). The Spirit bears fruit in us, for others to enjoy (v.22)?
 - c. The flesh has desires contrary to the Spirit (v.17).
 - d. There are 'deeds' of the flesh, vs. 'fruit' of the Spirit. Why this contrast?
 - e. What is the fruit of the Spirit? Why is the metaphor of fruit used? In contrast to the 'deeds of the flesh'?
 - i. Life gives birth to life
 - ii. Organic relationship
2. What is the flesh?
 - a. In Greek, it is the word *sarx*.
 - b. Do you think that the human problem is fundamentally internal to us? Or external to us? If external, where is it located? Only other people, or certain people, but not you? In bad government? Schools? Etc.?
 - c. How does this relate to prejudice and racism?
 - d. What does it mean that those who are driven by the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God in v.21?
3. What is the Spirit?
 - a. The presence of Christ in us, as we see in 4:6 and 4:19.
 - b. The means by which we participate in the very life of the Triune God of love.
 - c. What are the desires of the Spirit? The desires of a loving God, to show qualities of love in relationship.
 - d. What difficult relationships do you have right now?
4. What are we free from?
 - a. From the Mosaic Law, its Jewish-specific ethics, and its consequences of exile.
 - b. An existence that is apart from God, since if we have the Spirit we are drawn into the very life of the Triune God.

In his book, *Strength to Love*, King writes about coming to Montgomery to lead the bus boycott. Right after the protest, King and his wife got all kinds of phone calls and letters threatening their lives. After one such phone call, King says, 'I hung up, but I could not sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached the saturation point. I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. Finally, I went to the kitchen and heated a pot of coffee. I was ready to give up. I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing to be a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had almost gone, I determined to take my problem to [Jesus]. My head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud, '...The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left...' At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never before experienced him. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice, saying, 'Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth. God will be at your side forever.' ...Three nights later, our home was bombed. Strangely enough, I accepted the word of the bombing calmly. My experience with [Jesus]¹ had given me a new strength and trust. I knew now that [Jesus] is able to give us the interior resources to face the storms and problems of this life.'

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The rules were simple: If a white policeman or army officer voluntarily faced his accusers, confessed his crime, and fully acknowledged his guilt, he could not be tried and punished for that crime. Hard-liners grumbled about the obvious injustice of letting criminals go free, but Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu insisted that the country needed healing even more than it needed that particular brand of justice. At one hearing, a policeman named van de Broek recounted an incident when he and other officers shot an 18-year old boy and burned the body, turning it on a fire like a piece of barbeque meat, to destroy the evidence. Eight years later van de Broek returned to the same house and seized the boy's father. The wife was forced to watch as policemen bound her husband on a woodpile, poured gasoline over his body, and ignited it. The courtroom grew hushed as the elderly woman who had lost first her son and then her husband was

¹ King said 'God' but I referred to 'Jesus,' feeling that the evangelistic context in which I spoke warranted this identification, and that this identification was acceptable from King's writings.

given a chance to respond. 'What do you want from Mr. van de Broek?' the judge asked. She said she wanted van de Broek to go to the place where they burned her husband's body and gather up the dust so she could give him a decent burial. With his head down, the policeman nodded agreement. Then she, a follower of Jesus, added a further request: 'Mr. van de Broek took all my family away from me, and I still have a lot of love to give. Twice a month, I would like for him to come to the ghetto and spend a day with me so I can be a mother to him. And I would like Mr. van de Broek to know that he is forgiven by God, and that I forgive him too. I would like to embrace him so he can know my forgiveness is real.' Spontaneously, some in the courtroom began singing Amazing Grace as the elderly woman made her way to the witness stand, but van de Broek did not hear the hymn. He had fainted, overwhelmed. (from Philip Yancey, *Rumors of Another World*, 2003, Zondervan)

Black students helped end 'Massive Resistance'

Associated Press Writer / July 6, 2008

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/07/06/black_students_helped_end_massive_resistance/

NORFOLK, Va.—The “Norfolk 17” were honored Sunday at the church that educated them 50 years ago when six of the city’s all-white public schools closed under Virginia’s defiant response to court-ordered desegregation. Ten of the 14 surviving members of the Norfolk 17 -- who went on to integrate the public schools, enduring isolation and their classmates’ scorn -- attended the service at the First Baptist Church, where they were remembered as fearless civil rights pioneers in the segregated South. “We’re here to celebrate history,” the Rev. Robert G. Murray told the packed congregation. “All God’s children deserve an education.”

The 17 were among thousands of black students denied a place in the classroom during “Massive Resistance,” Virginia’s state-sponsored answer to the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that declared school segregation unconstitutional. “There were 17 stories. Each one of us has our own story. My brother died 14 years ago. His story is lost,” said Patricia Turner, who along with her late brother James Turner Jr. was among the 17.

Virginia’s Massive Resistance cut funds to any school that dared to integrate. Schools were closed and private academies were created to educate white students who could afford the tuition. The policy primarily affected schools in Charlottesville, Norfolk and Prince Edward County, which continued its own homegrown version of school segregation until 1964. In Norfolk, three all-white high schools and three junior high schools closed between September 1958 and February 1959 rather than accept black students. The Norfolk 17 were turned away from those six schools. At First Baptist Church, the 17 said they found loving, attentive and demanding teachers. In January 1959, state and federal courts declared that the school closings were unconstitutional. The Norfolk schools reopened in Feb. 2, 1959, and the 17 went on to attend the white schools, ending the era of Massive Resistance.

At school, the 17 were met by angry mobs and insults. Many said they were isolated from their white classmates during their high school years. The speakers mentioned Louis Cousins, who was widely depicted in a news photograph sitting alone in the Maury High School auditorium while white classmates were seated many rows away. Cousins attended Sunday’s celebration but did not speak. “These people were alone,” said John Charles Thomas, the first black justice on the Virginia Supreme Court and a product of the Norfolk public schools. “Every one of them was alone.” Thomas recalled the tumultuous era in which the young members of the Norfolk 17 integrated the city schools. The judge who ordered the schools reopened had a cross burned on his lawn, he said, and the civil rights movement was met with violence in many places.

“This was a dangerous time,” Thomas said to nods and amens of the congregation. “Think of the courage that it took for all of them to do what they did.” Turning to the first two rows of the church, Thomas said, “Norfolk 17, God knows we’re grateful.” Virginia established *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarships for people whose education was disrupted or ended during Massive Resistance. The city of Norfolk plans to conduct events marking the 50th anniversary of the end of Massive Resistance next year.